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"VERIDICTION AND DISINFORMATION: HOW GENERATIVE AI SHAPES POLITICAL TRUTH BETWEEN ETHICS AND MANIPULATION"

Prof. Paolo Peverini

SUPERVISOR

Chiara Valentini-105032

CANDIDATE

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Introduction

In the last decade, political communication has increasingly been re-shaped by the convergence of digital media, platform logics, and algorithmic infrastructures. Today, we are witnessing a further transformation, not merely in quantitative terms but also in their quality, that is the way political discourse is produced, distributed, and perceived. This shift is accelerated by the increasing spread of generative artificial intelligence, which no longer plays a passive or mediating role in communication but actively generates content: texts, images, videos, and voices that simulate human authorship and presence.

This thesis examines the discursive and semiotic impact of generative AI on political communication, with two specific analysis on the production and circulation of political deepfakes. These are audiovisual artefacts generated through machine learning models, capable of realistically simulating political figures, speeches, and events that never occurred. Far from being isolated or merely entertaining phenomena, deepfakes embody a new logic of enunciation in which verisimilitude is detached from truth, and the authority of the image is no longer anchored in indexical evidence but in algorithmic simulation.

The research seeks to answer the following central question: **How does generative AI intervene in the construction of political discourse, and what semiotic strategies underpin its capacity to persuade, manipulate, or destabilize truth in the public sphere?** From this question follow a series of subordinate inquiries: what happens to political subjectivity when it is generated or mimicked by machines? How is ideological content encoded in AI-generated artefacts? What regimes of visibility and credibility do these artefacts rely on, and challenge?

To explore these questions, the thesis adopts a theoretical and analytical approach grounded in semiotics. Drawing from both semiotics traditions (Greimas, 1983, Eco, 1979) and pragmatic theories of meaning (Latour, 2011), it focuses on how meaning is generated, modulated, and negotiated through signs, texts, and media devices. Particular attention is paid to the concepts of veridiction (Foucault, 2001, Charaudeau, 2005), manipulation, enunciative responsibility, and the "proof of enunciation" (Finocchi, 2023, Peverini 2025),

which are essential for understanding how deepfakes operate at the boundary between fiction and political reality.

The thesis also dialogues with contemporary theories of post-truth, mediatization, and platform politics, emphasizing how generative AI amplifies existing dynamics of disinformation, symbolic disintermediation, and affective polarization. In this regard, AI is not considered solely as a neutral technological tool, but as an agentive force inscribed in socio-discursive logics that transform the very nature of political visibility and credibility. As such, the study aligns with recent calls for a semiotics of artificial intelligence capable of addressing not only how AI systems work, but how they mean.

Methodologically, the research combines theoretical analysis with empirical, semiotic close readings of selected case studies. These include recent AI-generated political videos: the Trump "Trump Gaza" video and synthetic clips involving Volodymyr Zelensky, that have circulated widely online. These cases are analyzed not simply as examples of deception or digital manipulation, but as cultural artefacts: structured signifying systems that mobilize specific rhetorical forms, narrative patterns, visual grammars, and ideological framings.

The structure of the thesis reflects this integrated approach. Chapter one outlines the conceptual and theoretical framework, defining the key terms of political discourse and situating the study within relevant scholarly fields. Chapter two introduces the key notions of Artificial Intelligence and explores the symbolic and communicative properties of AI systems, focusing on their affordances, aesthetics, and their status as new discursive subjects. Chapter three presents the case studies, analyzing their visual, narrative, and rhetorical strategies. Finally, chapter four synthesizes the findings and reflects on the broader implications for the future of political communication, epistemic trust, and the construction of democratic discourse in an age of artificial semiotic actors.

In sum, this thesis argues that the rise of generative AI demands a rethinking of political discourse not only in terms of its content, but of its modes of production, its actors, and its semiotic articulation. By treating political deepfakes and related artefacts as complex discursive phenomena, it seeks to uncover how meaning is engineered in the age of synthetic

speech, how signs are weaponized, and how the very notion of political “reality” becomes increasingly negotiable, constructed and disputed.

Chapter1: Political discourse in the digital age: forms, actors, and rhetorical power

The first chapter of this thesis introduces the theoretical framework necessary to understand political communication as a symbolic and rhetorical practice. Rather than treating it as a neutral transfer of information, the chapter explores how political meaning is generated through cultural codes, power relations, and media environments. Drawing on semiotic theory and rhetorical analysis, it examines how language performs politics, constructs legitimacy, and produces truth effects.

The chapter begins with a semiotic perspective on communication, presenting key concepts from Roman Jakobson, Umberto Eco, and Algirdas Julien Greimas. It then addresses the role of rhetoric in political language, offering both a historical and conceptual overview. The core section defines political discourse and identifies its primary functions, focusing on its strategic and performative nature.

Subsequent sections explore the major forms of political discourse identified in recent scholarship. These include institutional, mediatized, populist, and digital discourse, each characterized by specific rhetorical strategies and communicative logics. The chapter also examines the main actors involved in political communication and the channels through which political messages are produced and disseminated.

The conclusion of the chapter reflects on the concept of political truth in the age of post-truth. Through the lens of semiotics and the theory of veridiction, it redefines political truth as a discursive construction shaped by coherence, repetition, and symbolic authority. This framework sets the stage for the analysis developed in the following chapter.

1.1 A Semiotic Perspective on Meaning and Communication

Semiotic theory provides a vital framework for comprehending political speech not as a transparent conveyance of information but rather as a culturally situated system that generates meaning by organized codes and interpretative conventions. To better grasp the nuances of political discourse, it is essential to begin with a brief overview of the key thinkers who laid the groundwork for the discipline, tracing its development from its linguistic roots. This preliminary step not only sheds light on how political language has evolved, but also helps decode the rhetorical strategies and conceptual frameworks that continue to shape political communication today.

Roman Jakobson, as one of the key figures for the development of semiotics, saw communication as a complex act comprising six interrelated elements: the addresser, the addressee, the message, the context, the contact and the code (1960). Among these components, it's crucial to highlight the importance of the code, defined as the shared system of signs and rules that allows the sender and the receiver to understand each other. It is the set of conventions—linguistic or otherwise—that both parties must know in order for the message to be successfully encoded by the sender and decoded by the receiver. Without a common code, communication breaks down, as the symbols used in the message would have no agreed-upon meaning (ibid). Roman Jakobson, in his seminal essay "Linguistics and Poetics" (1960), identifies six fundamental functions of language, each corresponding to a different element of the communicative act. These include the referential function, which relates to the context and conveys information; the emotive function, which expresses the speaker's attitudes or emotions; the conative function, which is oriented toward the receiver and aims to influence their behavior; the phatic function, which serves to establish or maintain communication; the metalingual function, which clarifies or defines the code being used; and the poetic function, which focuses on the form of the message itself. Among these, the conative and poetic functions are particularly relevant in the analysis of political discourse. The conative function underlines the inherently persuasive nature of political language, where the speaker's intent is often to shape opinions or prompt action. The poetic function, on the other hand, highlights the strategic use of linguistic form—through rhetorical

devices, repetition, and stylistic choices—that enhances the emotional and mnemonic impact of a message. In political communication, therefore, not only what is said, but how it is said becomes central to the effectiveness of the discourse (ibidem).

Building on this functionalist approach, Umberto Eco introduces a semiotic perspective that shifts the focus from speaker intention to the interpretative competence of the audience. In Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language (1984), Eco argues that communication is made possible not by an unequivocal transmission of meaning, but through a tacit contract between interlocutors grounded in a shared encyclopedia of cultural knowledge and normative codes. This shared repertoire forms the basis for interpretation, which Eco conceptualizes as an inferential process governed by socially constructed conventions rather than by individual intuition or authorial intent. Meaning, in this framework, is never fixed or self-evident; it emerges dynamically through the interaction between the text and the cultural competences activated by the reader or listener (Eco, 1984). By integrating Jakobson's emphasis on linguistic function with Eco's theory of interpretative cooperation, we gain a more nuanced understanding of political discourse as both a structured and negotiated act—one where persuasion operates not only through rhetorical force, but also through the activation of collective meaning-making frameworks.

Algirdas Julien Greimas adds a further analytical dimension to the study of meaning-making by distinguishing between the empirical speaker and the speaker as a discursive function (1984). This shift in focus allows for a structural analysis of how enunciative frameworks, rather than personal identities, generate meaning through the assignment of roles, values, and narrative positions. In this framework, communication does not simply reflect the speaker's psychological or social traits; instead, it constructs a semantic universe in which meaning arises from the internal logic of discourse itself (Broden, 2014). One of the most frequently cited aspects of Greimas's theory is his concept of veridiction, a semiotic mechanism for classifying utterances based on their position within the discourse, rather than their empirical truth. Through his veridictory square, Greimas outlines four modalities—truth, lie, error, and secret—that represent discursive stances rather than epistemic states. These categories do not evaluate statements by their factual correspondence to reality but rather by how they function within the rhetorical and narrative architecture of the text (ibid.).

However, reducing Greimas's contribution solely to this taxonomy would be a significant oversimplification. His broader theoretical work encompasses the development of actantial models, the semiotic square, and a sophisticated theory of narrative structure that explores how deep semantic relations underpin surface-level discourse. Greimas's semiotics thus offers a comprehensive toolkit for analyzing not only how meaning is conveyed, but how it is systematically constructed, contested, and transformed across various discursive contexts. In the realm of political communication, this structuralist perspective allows for an understanding of discourse as a site of role allocation and value negotiation—where the apparent "truth" of a statement is less a matter of fact than of narrative positioning and symbolic function.

If we apply the proposed theoretical and methodological approaches to the political discourse, we can then argue that legitimacy and meaning are crafted through complex strategies, rather than just transferred. In this sense, language functions less as a mirror of reality than as a tool for organizing symbolic oppositions and creating the impression of coherence, so configuring perception. According to Jakobson's study, political discourse frequently has its impact not by substance but by the formal and functional alignment of its elements with audience expectations (Jakobson, 1960). Eco underlines that historical codes and cultural filters always mediate the intelligibility and believability of speech, therefore forming the interpretative techniques open to the audience (Eco, 1984). Greimas presents an exact narrative of how political claims reach truth value by orienting oneself inside a system of relations that makes them credible or authoritative rather than by appealing to an outside reality (Broden, 2014).

This helps us to see political speech as a domain in which truth is not discovered but expressed. It serves as a performative system whereby messages get their validity from how successfully they occupy the discursive area allocated for what is taken to be true. Semiotic theory thus enables a critical knowledge of political language as a venue where power and belief are contested through enunciation, codification and symbolic consistency (ibidem).

1.1.1 Semiotic and the construction of political discourse

It is crucial to highlight that these theoretical premises rest on the adoption of a semiotic perspective that does not confine itself to written or narrative texts in the traditional sense. Instead, it conceives of the text as a model of meaning production that can take many forms. According to Fabbri (1998), a text is not simply a physical object such as a speech, a book, or a document, nor is it defined solely by its genre or style. Rather, it is a structure capable of producing sense, of organizing and distributing meaning within a culturally recognized system of signs. Gianfranco Marrone (2001) extends this perspective by arguing that many things we do not normally think of as texts, including political rituals, public ceremonies, institutional behaviors, and even strategic silences, can be treated as full-fledged texts provided they are structured, interpretable, and socially codified. In this broader framework, politics does not simply make use of texts. It is text in itself, understood as a complex network of practices, utterances, performances, and symbolic systems that are constantly producing and negotiating meaning.

This shift from a narrow to an expanded concept of the text allows the inclusion of a wide range of political phenomena within our analysis. Examples include speeches, debates, dress codes, flags, slogans, and even moments of silence. Everything that is socially readable, everything that makes sense in a specific cultural and ideological context, becomes an object for semiotic analysis. From here, the discussion naturally progresses to the concept of discourse. Fabbri (1992) describes discourse not merely as language in action, but as the space where the text is activated and interpreted in real time by actual subjects situated in concrete historical and social conditions. Discourse is the arena in which meaning takes form, where intentions and interpretations interact, and where ideological conflicts play out. In political contexts, discourse is the intersection of institutional authority, public opinion, and symbolic power, where what is said, how it is said, and who says it all become fundamental.

When applied to the political sphere, semiotics offers precise tools for analyzing how language functions not only as a medium of expression but also as a mechanism for constructing symbolic authority, legitimacy, and ideological alignment. Language is not a

neutral vehicle. It is a structured field of oppositions, roles, and functions that generate meaning through selective codification. According to Çanakpınar et al. (2019), political discourse acquires its persuasive force through the arrangement of binary oppositions such as us versus them, genuine versus corrupt, or people versus elite. These oppositions do not reflect objective reality but function as semiotic structures that organize the political field and allow some actors to claim legitimacy while excluding others. The authors show how political agents adopt the role of acting subjects, frame their opponents as antagonists, and position institutional elements as helpers or obstacles, depending on narrative needs, using the Greimasian actantial model.

Greimas's theory of enunciation further supports this approach by explaining how the subject of the utterance is constructed within discourse. As noted by Broden (2014), the enunciator is not an individual with explicit intentions but a discursive position defined by values and social responsibilities. The credibility of political speech is therefore not rooted in the identity of the speaker, but in the discursive function he occupies within the symbolic framework of the utterance. Greimas also introduces the concept of veridiction, which helps to understand how discourse generates truth-effects. This is not done by aligning with empirical facts, but by organizing statements into recognizable structures of rationality and ideological coherence. The veridictory square, which includes the modalities of truth, lie, error, and secret, offers a model for interpreting political assertions based on their discursive positioning rather than their factual accuracy.

Eco (2007) contributes to this analysis with his reflections on populist rhetoric. He observes that such rhetoric often simplifies complex issues into emotionally charged binary oppositions that are easy to interpret. This simplification is not accidental but follows a rhetorical strategy aimed at achieving interpretative clarity through repetition and symbolic familiarity. Even when the underlying message is ideologically complex or deliberately ambiguous, it is structured around a limited set of symbolic operations that convey a sense of clarity and directness.

In this sense, political language can be understood as a space of symbolic performance in which semiotic strategies are used to construct identities, forge alliances, and establish ideological positions. These strategies involve the use of oppositions, the narrative framing

of events, and the discursive management of truth conceived as a meaning effect. Semiotics, therefore, provides both a vocabulary and a method for examining how political discourse produces authority and meaning. Focusing on enunciation, veridiction, and narrative roles allows us to recognize how political speech becomes effective, credible, and socially impactful, even in the absence of factual truth.

1.2 An introduction to rhetoric

Rhetoric is traditionally considered as the art of persuasive communication. Its origins are dated back to classical antiquity, where it was established as a core discipline to be taught and as a main tool in political life. Rhetoric has been defined as a structured method of reasoning aimed at influencing judgment and fostering collective agreement. It does not merely refer to the embellishment or manipulation of language, instead it is an art that involves written and oral language in their entirety (Aristotele, trans. Roberts, 2004; Charaudeau, 2005).

In its foundational articulation, rhetoric is defined by Aristotle as the faculty for identifying the available means of persuasion within a given situation. He distinguishes three essential components of persuasive speech: *ethos*, referring to the speaker's credibility and authority; *pathos*, the capacity to mobilize emotional response; and *logos*, which designates not just logical coherence but the ability to construct reasoned and lucid arguments. These elements do not act in isolation. Their integration, adapted to the communicative context, is what produces effective persuasion (Aristotele, trans. Roberts, 2004).

Over time, rhetoric has undergone many evolution. Starting from its classical formulation by Aristotle, that has been re-proposed also in ancient Rome particularly by Cicero, and Quintiliano, it entered the medieval curriculum as part of the *trivium*[1]. During

[1] A group of studies consisting of grammar, rhetoric, and logic and forming the lower division of the seven liberal arts in medieval universities

the Renaissance, rhetoric gained prominence again in the domain of eloquence and civic engagement. The Enlightenment era, however, saw a temporary decline of rhetorical studies, because the emphasis shifted to formal logic and empirical reasoning. In the twentieth century, rhetoric experienced a revival through its integration into the fields of communication theory, literary analysis, and semiotics, where it came to be viewed not only as a persuasive technique but also as a discursive practice embedded in broader cultural and ideological processes (Caputo, 2021).

Today, rhetoric remains a key tool in political communication. Political actors employ rhetorical strategies not solely to justify policies or win support, but also to perform leadership, construct ideological coherence, and recognizing power structures. As Charaudeau (2005) observes, politics relies heavily on rhetorical operations because it functions within a symbolic order where language is performative and constitutive. Political messages are not only informational, they are designed to align with audience values, emotional dispositions, and cultural expectations. Unlike populist discourse, which often privileges emotional resonance over logical argument, rhetorical discourse in both classical and contemporary contexts aims to balance emotional appeal with rational deliberation and institutional credibility.

At this point, it is necessary to distinguish rhetoric from semiotics. While rhetoric is concerned with persuasion and the structuring of discourse to influence an audience, semiotics focuses on how meaning is generated and interpreted within systems of signs. Rhetoric, therefore, addresses the strategic and performative aspects of communication, whereas semiotics provides tools for analyzing its symbolic structures and interpretive codes. Though both disciplines intersect in the study of political discourse, they operate on different analytical levels: one oriented toward communicative effect, the other toward semantic interpretation (Eco, 1975; Caputo, 2021).

In summary, rhetoric constitutes a historically grounded and conceptually robust framework for analyzing political language. From its classical roots to its contemporary reconfigurations, rhetoric offers essential means for understanding how discourse performs power, constructs authority, and generates legitimacy. This theoretical grounding will serve

as the basis for the upcoming analysis of institutional, mediatized, populist, and digital forms of political speech.

1.3 Political Discourse: Definition and Functions

Political discourse is a multifaceted and context-dependent communicative practice that plays a central role in shaping collective meaning, negotiating power relations, and constructing ideological frameworks. From a semiotic perspective, it should not be regarded as a transparent vehicle for information, but rather as a performative and socially embedded process through which meaning is generated and recognized. Authors such as Greimas have recognized that the speaker, within political communication, does not merely express a personal viewpoint but occupies a discursive function that activates symbolic oppositions, narrative roles, and legitimacy effects (Broden, 2014). In a complementary view, Eco argues that the interpretation of political messages depends on shared cultural codes, and that discourse becomes meaningful insofar as it resonates with the encyclopedic knowledge of a given community (Eco, 1984). Within this framework, rhetoric must be seen as a strategic component of political communication as it contributes to shaping the discourse in ways that align with the values, emotions, and expectations of the audience, thereby reinforcing the performative dimension of meaning-making (Charaudeau, 2005).

Political discourse has to change to represent changing media and historical settings. From oral debates in Greek *ecclesia*[2] to codified declarations of absolutist courts, from Enlightenment-era pamphleteering to televised addresses, political language has always evolved to fit the dominant channels and formats of its time to more recently, algorithmically mediated social media posts. Every media environment, claims McNair (2020), has helped to rethink not only the extent and reach of political communication but also the hierarchies of legitimacy and involvement that go along with it. Published in 63 BCE, Cicero's

[2] **The *ecclesia* (ἐκκλησία)** was the principal assembly of Athenian democracy in classical Greece. Composed of male citizens, it functioned as the central institution of political deliberation and decision-making, empowered to debate and vote on laws, war, public policy, and magistracies.

Catilinarian Orations are among the most well-known examples of ancient political eloquence. Presenting Catilina as an existential threat to the Roman Republic, these speeches show the deliberate use of language to maintain institutional authority in the middle of a supposed crisis, therefore supporting the orator's dedication to the civic order. Such books show, as Ginzburg (1994) notes, how political speech has always served through story and moral framing and how its capacity to establish public truth predates modern media by centuries. Although distribution systems have changed, the essential objective of political debate in determining shared priorities and limits has stayed constant over history.

Contemporary scholars have proposed two main ways to conceptualize political discourse. The first identifies it with the speech acts produced by institutional actors in formal settings such as parliaments, governmental declarations, and official campaigns, where the legitimacy of the speaker derives from their institutional role (van Dijk, 1997). The second approach shifts the focus to the communicative functions performed by discourse itself. According to Wilson (2015), political discourse is not defined solely by the identity of the speaker, but by the intent to intervene in public decision-making and to influence political realities. From this wider perspective, people, reporters, activists, and even online users become legitimate political speakers since their speech helps to shape public meaning. Political language, particularly in its institutional forms, according to Charaudeau (2020) and Gallo (2020), typically reinforces asymmetries between speaker and audience, usually by means of defined registers and controlled communicative formats. This point of view emphasizes the essentially hierarchical and strategic character of political speech, which combines the control of meaning with the exercise of power.

These approaches are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they reflect two complementary dimensions of political discourse: as a linguistic object dealing with political topics, and as a social practice that contributes to enacting politics through language (Wilson, 2015). Van Dijk recognizes this dual nature when he states that "*doing politics by text and talk is obviously more than producing or perceiving discourse in political contexts and by political actors"* (van Dijk, 1997, p.20).

Based on this theoretical framework, four key functions of political discourse can be identified. First, an informative function, whereby discourse communicates policy decisions,

legislative developments, or institutional stances. Second, a legitimating function, which serves to justify authority, reaffirm institutional narratives, and consolidate political positions. Third, a persuasive function, through which speakers aim to influence public opinion, attract consensus, and discredit opponents. Finally, a recognizing function, which calls individuals to participate in collective action, whether through voting, protesting, or aligning with ideological causes. These functions do not operate in isolation; rather, they are deeply interconnected and frequently supported by rhetorical strategies designed to enhance emotional appeal and symbolic resonance (Charaudeau, 2005; Gallo, 2020).

To conclude this paragraph, it is essential to note that political discourse should be understood as a strategic and context-sensitive use of language that reflects and actively shapes, political realities trough semiotics and rhetoric. The subsequent sections will show, the discursive forms through which politics is enacted vary significantly depending on the medium, the rhetorical conventions, and the ideological stakes involved. The following paragraphs will explore the main types of political discourse that have been identified through the study of different scholars: namely institutional, mediatized, populist, and digital. Each of them exemplifies a distinct configuration of rhetorical practices and communicative logics within the contemporary political landscape.

1.3.1 Institutional discourse

Institutional discourse emerges historically with the consolidation of bureaucratic and administrative apparatuses, where communicative practices become codified in order to standardize authority and procedural legitimacy (Charaudeau, 2020). It is a structured form of communication that can be found in contexts where participants act within, or on behalf of, formal organizations. What shape these communicative practices are institutional goals, role hierarchies, and normative expectations, and often aim to fulfill tasks such as issuing decisions, managing procedures, or enforcing rules. Differently from ordinary conversation, institutional discourse tends to be formal, asymmetrical, and oriented toward efficiency and control.

The main characteristic of Institutional discourse Is Its regulated nature. Interactions take place following a pre-established formats, governed by institutional rules that dictate who can speak, when, and in what manner. This often results in asymmetrical exchanges, where one speaker, typically the institutional representative, holds greater authority in managing the flow and content of the conversation. Freed notes that, *"the language used, the nature of the interaction, and the speakers' goals are at least partially determined by the institution in play."* (Freed, 2015, p.1), highlighting how communicative behavior is shaped by institutional context.

This asymmetry is evident not only in the participants' roles but also in the distribution of knowledge and discursive rights. Institutional agents are often equipped with specialized training, access to institutional norms, and experience in controlling communicative procedures. Their ability to initiate topics, ask questions, and evaluate responses is rarely matched by the other participant, who usually occupies a subordinate or dependent role within the interaction.

Institutional discourse also cover the function of being a mechanism of social reproduction. Language is used by institutions to stabilize their own legitimacy, reinforce expected behaviors, and produce coherent narratives about their identity and purpose. Even when interactions appear neutral or procedural, they often contribute to the maintenance of broader power relations. Scholars such as Freed (2015) and Mayr (2015) have shown in critical discourse analysis that these practices frequently reflect and perpetuate dominant ideologies, especially when framed as impartial or purely administrative.

Despite changes in the forms and media of institutional interaction, such as the integration of digital technologies, many of these features remain constant. The task orientation, the preference for clarity and control, and the unequal allocation of communicative resources continue to characterize how institutional discourse operates in both traditional and contemporary settings.

In conclusion, institutional discourse represents a communicative genre that is formalized, asymmetrical, and deeply embedded in organizational structures. It regulates how authority is enacted, how tasks are accomplished, and how institutional identities are maintained. Scholars have pointed out that this is often reinforced through the use of codified

language and discursive formulas that produce distance and opacity, shaping a communicative dynamic where institutions speak from a position of authority that is rarely contestable (Gallo, 2020; Charaudeau, 2020).

1.3.2 Mediatized discourse

Mediatized political discourse refers to the production and circulation of political language through media environments, where communication is not only transmitted but fundamentally shaped by the logics and limitations of media systems. The concept of *mediatization* describes a progressive but profound transformation: political communication no longer adapts media channels to its needs, but instead adapts itself to the requirements and preferences of media platforms. Over the last century, technological shifts, from print, to television, to digital media, have redefined the conditions in which political discourse operates, altering its formats, temporalities, and hierarchies of visibility (McNair, 2020). In modern democracies, media have become central, representing the primary arena in which political discourse unfolds. This shift implies that political actors are increasingly dependent on media exposure to communicate their messages, frame issues, and gain legitimacy.

According to Strömbäck (2008), the mediatization of politics passes through four distinct phases: media as channels, media gaining autonomy, political adaptation, and media logic internalization, culminating in a stage in which *"political and other social actors not only adapt to the media logic and the predominant news values, but also internalize these and, more or less consciously, allow the media logic and the predominant news values to become an integrated part of the political logic"* (Strömbäck, 2008, p. 239). This final phase is marked by a full Internalization of media expectations, In which political actors construct their discourse with media visibility in mind from the outset.

Mediatized discourse is therefore governed by media logic, a term that encompasses the stylistic and structural preferences typical of contemporary media. These include brevity, personalization, conflict-orientation, dramatization, and emotional appeal. Political content is increasingly designed to fit news formats, rather than to support institutional deliberation

or policy detail. As a result, the structure of political discourse tends to prioritize rhetorical strategies that guarantee coverage and resonance over those that foster complexity or ideological depth.

This evolution has significant rhetorical implications. In traditional institutional settings, political rhetoric was often grounded in procedural authority, argumentative consistency, and ideological coherence. In mediatized environments, however, visibility becomes a new form of authority. The credibility of a political figure is often linked to their capacity to perform effectively across media platforms, rather than to their institutional position or argumentative strength. As Esser and Strömbäck (2014) note, *"media logic broadly corresponds to what Croteau and Hoynes (2001) label the market model"*, which privileges content that is commercially viable, emotionally charged, and formatted for rapid consumption (Esser & Strömbäck, 2014, p. 233).

In this context, political actors do not merely use media to disseminate their discourse; they pre-structure their communication in anticipation of media coverage. Political discourse is increasingly constructed to generate soundbites, provoke reactions, and mobilize emotions, often at the expense of argumentative depth or democratic deliberation. This affects not only how political ideas are expressed, but also which voices gain prominence and which forms of rhetoric dominate public debate. Less mediatizable forms of discourse, such as slow, technical, or collective deliberation, tend to be marginalized in favor of communicative performances that align with journalistic norms.

Moreover, mediatized political discourse contributes to the personalization and spectacularization of politics. Political figures are often presented as individual personalities rather than institutional representatives. Their visibility, image, and narrative arc become as important as their policy proposals. This rhetorical focus on the persona reshapes the communicative contract between politicians and citizens, privileging emotional identification over ideological alignment.

In conclusion, mediatized political discourse represents a distinct rhetorical regime, where the traditional relationship between speaker, content, and audience is redefined by media logic. It is not merely a vehicle through which political messages travel, but a transformative environment that alters the very structure of political communication.

Understanding this form of discourse is crucial for analyzing how power, persuasion, and legitimacy function in media-saturated societies, and for recognizing how rhetorical strategies evolve when politics becomes performative and visibility-driven.

1.3.3 Populist discourse

Populist discourse has established itself, in its contemporary configuration, as a communicative and symbolic response to the crises of representation and the processes of disintermediation that have affected Western democracies. As Moffitt and Tormey (2013) argue, populism does not constitute a coherent ideology, but rather a political style that spans different ideological positions and is articulated in a performative repertoire focused on the construction of emotional proximity and public visibility. This style is based on a strategy of moral polarization that contrasts the "people," represented as a virtuous unity, with the "elite," depicted as corrupt, distant, and illegitimate (Charaudeau, 2009).

According to Charaudeau (2009), the strength of populist discourse lies in its capacity to construct a simplified image of the political field, reduced to a confrontation between good and evil, truth and falsehood. This oppositional structure is not only ideological but eminently discursive: it manifests through the use of direct, affective, and anti-technical language, aimed more at denunciation than deliberation. In line with this logic, Arroyas Langa and Fernández Ilundain (2019) emphasize how populism favors spectacular expressive modes and communicative strategies of rupture, based on a theatricalization of politics and the erosion of institutional mediation.

In the digital context, these dynamics intensify. Sedda (2023) describes how the environment of social media fosters a logic of *spreadability*, where the value of a piece of content is determined by its ability to circulate and generate reactions, rather than by its coherence or truthfulness. This mechanism rewards polarizing, emotional, and synthetic messages, strengthening the impact of populist discourse and facilitating the aggregation around immediately recognizable meanings. The construction of collective identity is

therefore based on an emotional truth, which does not require verification but is grounded in the effect of shared recognition.

The figure of the populist leader plays a central role in this configuration. Moffitt and Tormey (2013) observe that populist authority does not rest on institutional competence but on the performative ability to embody "the people." Proni (2021) explains that this process also involves non-verbal communication of a *phatic* type, that is, a set of visual and behavioral signals that produce symbolic proximity and perceived authenticity. The apparent banality or informality of the leader's body, visual references to local identities, and the spectacularization of the everyday function as semiotic strategies for reinforcing affective adherence.

This identity construction is accompanied by significant semantic ambivalence. As Sedda and Demuru (2018) note, populist discourse makes use of deliberately vague categories such as "people," "nation," or "sovereignty," which allow the aggregation of heterogeneous social subjects under a common signifier. This symbolic vagueness represents a strategic resource: it allows the discourse to adapt to multiple contexts without losing mobilizing effectiveness. From a semiotic perspective, this mechanism can be interpreted as a form of *flexible veridiction*, that is, a discursive regime in which the production of "truth" does not depend on correspondence with reality, but on coherence with a symbolic system accepted by the audience (ibidem).

In the framework of post-truth, as described by Lorusso (2018), populist discourse affirms a kind of emotional truth that does not rely on factual verification but on shared recognition, cultural resonance, and symbolic familiarity. Although Eco (1984) does not deal explicitly with populism, his notion of interpretative codes helps explain how certain messages become credible within specific cultural communities.

In summary, populist discourse configures itself as a rhetorical and semiotic form oriented toward the affective construction of political legitimacy, through the combined use of moral oppositions, performative visibility, and symbolic simplification. Its effectiveness derives from the ability to activate mechanisms of immediate identification, in which "truth" is perceived as a shared experience rather than the outcome of rational negotiation.

1.3.4 Digital discourse

With the rise of digital platforms, political discourse has undergone a profound structural and functional transformation, which has redefined the conditions for the production, circulation, and reception of public language. This discursive form, developed within interactive, participatory, and highly mediatized digital environments, differs from previous configurations due to its ability to combine communicative disintermediation, personalized visibility, and affective rhetorics. Understanding digital political discourse thus requires analyzing not only what is said, but how the digital environment shapes its logic, form, and legitimacy.

One of the distinctive features of this discursive form is disintermediation, understood as the progressive marginalization of traditional filters, particularly those exerted by journalistic media. Political actors can now address citizens directly through posts, videos, tweets, or live streams, bypassing mechanisms of verification and contextualization that once characterized institutional communication. According to Kruse et al. (2018), this configuration contributes to dissolving the boundary between public and private registers, as political leaders tend to present themselves simultaneously as authoritative figures and as intimate, empathetic subjects. However, the rhetoric of immediacy does not necessarily guarantee more deliberative or democratic dialogue. The same authors report that many users abstain from active participation precisely because of the hostility and polarization they perceive in digital contexts.

Within these spaces, the algorithmic architecture of platforms exerts a significant influence on the form and content of political discourse. Saaida (2023) highlights how content selection and visibility mechanisms favor emotional, conflictual, and spectacular material over rational argumentation or pluralistic debate. This process, driven by the logic of engagement, promotes the dissemination of divisive rhetoric and enhances the symbolic impact of brief, repetitive, and polarizing messages, often at the expense of analytical depth. In this scenario, political visibility is no longer the result of public relevance but the outcome of a communication strategy deliberately shaped to interact with the affective economy of digital platforms.

Another characteristic feature of digital political discourse is its rhetorical form, often marked by processes of explicitation. As Gumul (2010) notes, online environments tend to induce a reformulation of political content toward greater formal transparency, argumentative simplification, and expressive emotionality. Explicitation, in this context, manifests in the use of slogans, repetition, binary oppositions, and assertive tones, aimed at reinforcing the recipient's identification but also at the risk of impoverishing the complexity of public debate.

The digitization of political discourse has also amplified the vulnerability of the public sphere to disinformation. The ease with which misleading content, conspiracy theories, or manipulative narratives circulate online has eroded the epistemic foundations of democratic confrontation. Saaida (2023) argues that the accessibility and viral potential of digital content have made plausibility more influential than truth, fueling cognitive fragmentation and self-referential echo chambers that hinder the construction of shared realities.

Despite these risks, the emancipatory potential of digital political discourse cannot be overlooked. Social platforms have enabled the emergence of subjectivities previously excluded from institutional circuits, offering concrete tools for dissent and visibility. However, as Kruse et al. (2018) point out, this openness remains conditioned by the commercial logic of platforms, by algorithmic filtering, and by the structural surveillance that limits access to heterogeneous viewpoints and the possibility of authentic pluralism.

From a semiotic perspective, digital discourse can be interpreted as a form of *emotional veridiction*. This concept, inspired by Greimas's *veridictory square*, refers to a discursive regime in which "truth" is not evaluated based on correspondence with reality but on the enunciative position of the subject and its ability to produce a recognized effect of credibility (Greimas, 1983). In this view, as Eco (1984) reminds us, what is perceived as true does not depend on factual verification but on the alignment of the text with the cultural codes and interpretive encyclopedia of the recipient.

In conclusion, digital political discourse represents an ambivalent evolution of public communication. On the one hand, it offers new forms of participation, visibility, and symbolic production; on the other, it intensifies processes of polarization, simplification, and

epistemic instability. Its analysis requires attention not only to the expressed contents but above all to the forms and mechanisms that determine its effectiveness, circulation, and legitimacy within the contemporary public sphere.

1.4 Actors of contemporary political communication

The landscape of political communication has undergone a substantial reconfiguration, not only in terms of platforms and technologies but also with respect to the range and role of actors participating in public discourse. Historically, political communication was primarily the domain of institutional elites (elected officials, party representatives, governmental bodies, and supranational institutions) who operated through formalized and hierarchical channels. As McNair (2020) argues, throughout the twentieth century, political communication in liberal democracies was largely managed by professional political actors whose messages were filtered and legitimated by traditional mass media systems.

Political parties played a central role in this institutional ecosystem. They served as collective agents of interest aggregation, programmatic articulation, and electoral mobilization. In parallel, institutions such as national governments, the European Union, and global organizations like the United Nations generated policy-oriented discourses that aimed at maintaining systemic stability and legitimizing authority. These actors framed public debate according to established procedural norms and ideological frameworks.

However, this centralized model has gradually been disrupted. From the 1980s onward and increasingly in the digital age political communication has opened up to a broader constellation of non-institutional actors. Social movements, grassroots associations, civic committees, and activists have gained discursive visibility, challenging hegemonic narratives and expanding the boundaries of legitimate political speech. This expansion of voice reflects a shift toward a more decentralized and contested public sphere.

In this context, the role of ordinary citizens has been radically transformed. Citizens are no longer passive recipients of political information but active producers of political content.

Another category of emerging political actors consists of digital influencers and content creators. According to Saaida (2023), these figures deliberately exploit the affordances of social media platforms to participate in political discourse, merging ideological messaging, personal branding, and entertainment. Despite lacking formal political authority, their communicative reach often surpasses that of traditional elites, allowing them to set agendas, frame debates, and shape political sentiment.

Sheafer (2001) adds a crucial perspective by proposing an actor-centered model of political legitimacy. In highly mediatized environments, charismatic skill and performative competence become central to the political actor's ability to gain visibility and public recognition. Rather than deriving legitimacy solely from institutional position, political figures increasingly depend on their capacity to engage audiences through personalized performances. This transformation indicates a structural shift in the conditions of political authority, from institutional representation to symbolic resonance.

In sum, contemporary political communication is marked by a pluralization of actors, whose legitimacy is no longer determined exclusively by formal status, but by communicative effectiveness within a competitive and mediatized public space. The coexistence of institutional, non-institutional, and hybrid actors reflects a more fragmented and dynamic ecosystem, in which political meaning is constantly negotiated, contested, and redefined.

1.5 Channels of contemporary political communication

Over time, political statements have drastically evolved in their paths, reach, and influence on public opinion. Political communication now comes from official speeches, press releases, and planned TV interviews among other sources. It travels several channels at once today in several formats, usually adjusting itself to the logic of the media it runs across.

Making sense of how political meaning is generated, changed, and challenged in the convoluted media environment of today depends on an awareness of these channels.

In the past, conventional media dominated political communication most of the time. Gatekeeper were newspapers, radio, and television. They chose which subjects were crucial, filtered out dubious material, and only gave voices deemed credible visibility. Through editorial control, these media helped the public make sense of policies, elections, and political events in a somewhat steady communicative environment, hence shaping political debate as McNair (2020) notes.

The emergence of digital media started this model to change. Esser and Matthes (2013) contend that the growing impact of media logic on political life, what they refer to as "mediatization"[3], has altered the way political players behave and speak. Politicians these days compete for attention as much as for votes. They keep things brief, personal, emotive, and fast, so tailing their messaging to media guidelines. Political debate turns increasingly toward impact and visibility rather than argument and complexity.

Political communication now mostly finds place on social media sites including Twitter (X), Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. These systems are not neutral instruments. They operate by algorithms determining which messages we first view. Algorithms can offer greater space to stuff that is passionate, provocative, or simple, because that is what people react to quickly, as Saaida (2023) notes. The most obvious political messages are thus not always the most fair or educational. The outcome is an impassioned, fast-paced political dialogue with often polarizing tendencies.

Disintermediation is one key aspect of this change. Politicians no longer have to depend on reporters to get their messages out there. Citizens can be directly addressed by their own channels and accounts. This might provide communication more real and intimate quality. It does, however, also bring issues. Lack of reporters to fact-check or offer background makes it more likely that false information will proliferate and more difficult for the public to separate truth from opinion.

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[3] The influence of media logic and format on communication and content, a factor suggesting the importance of *how* things are communicated. https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110810105358102#:~:text=1.,also%20media%20culture%3B%20media%20event.

Today, we live in a hybrid media environment whereby conventional and digital channels interact constantly. A political message might start as a TV interview, get mention in a news story, then go viral as a meme or tweet. Every stride alters the meaning, form, or tone of the message. According to McNair (2020), this is a "media ecology": a complicated environment in which the platforms carrying messages influence not only their writers but also their shape.

Political communication nowadays, meanwhile, passes via several and often shifting channels. Fast, emotional, graphic, and quite responsive to the technical and social dynamics of the platforms it employs. These channels shape rather than only provide material. Furthermore, they influence how democracy functions by means of content shaping: who talks, who gets heard, and how meaning is created in public life.

1.6 Political truth in the age of post-truth

Political truth in modern discourse does not based on a set relationship between language and reality. Rather, it reveals itself from the rhetorical and symbolic settings in which truth is generated, acknowledged, and shared. Semiotic theory presents a critical viewpoint for grasping this change. Greimas and Eco challenge us to see truth as a discursive impact dependent on cultural standards, institutional authority, and narrative coherence rather than as a straight mirror of facts.

Greimas (1983), through the model of the veridictory square, demonstrated that regimes of truth within texts are not based on the empirical verification of propositions, but are instead discursive effects constructed enunciatively. The categories he identifies—truth, falsehood, error, and secret—do not describe epistemological states, but semiotic positions within a narrative or argumentative structure. In this perspective, truth is not something to be verified externally, but something produced internally by the logic of discourse and the roles assigned to speakers and statements.

While Greimas himself did not explicitly address contemporary phenomena such as populism or post-truth communication, his model has been later employed by scholars to interpret how modern political discourses create effects of credibility that are not anchored in factual accuracy. As Anna Maria Lorusso (2018) argues, in post-truth regimes, the truth-value of statements often depends less on their referential validity and more on the emotional, ideological, or identity-based alignment of the speaker with the audience. In this context, the veridiction square becomes a useful tool for understanding how discursive positions—rather than empirical logic—shape the perception of truth in political communication.

Umberto Eco improves on this by emphasizing the interpretive framework that helps statements to seem believable. In *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language* (1984), he contends that a statement becomes "true" when it fits the encyclopedia of shared knowledge kept by a cultural community. The fit of a document with the standards and expectations of its intended audience determines its credibility more so than its objective substance. Eco emphasizes later in *The Limits of Interpretation* (1990) how interpretive contracts frame what can be acknowledged as valid conversation, therefore stabilizing meaning. In this sense, truth is a rhetorical arrangement encouraged by semiotic rules rather than a mirror of the world.

Emphasizing that truth now is progressively influenced by repetition, framing, and ideological filtering, Paura (2019) stretches this argument into the postmodern state. Often, what is regarded true correlates not with confirmation but with narrative familiarity. In the post-truth era, the definition of reality is more influenced by how effectively a message connects with current points of view than by actual accuracy.

Political truth has been created historically via public debate and institutional validation. It is grounded in democratic values that give evidence-based knowledge, journalistic investigation, and academic experience top priority. Lilleker (2017) claims that this approach places truth as a cornerstone of civic legitimacy, offering a shared basis for public knowledge and public decisions. Within this communicative system, the voices of scientists, reporters, and law officials act as stabilizers.

The basis has been rocked, nevertheless, by the emergence of post-truth rhetoric According to the Oxford English Dictionary's 2016 definition, the phrase "post-truth" characterizes a cultural period in which emotional appeal and personal belief have more

persuasive force than objective reality. Modreanu (2017) notes that the way social media platforms reward emotionally charged material and enable the quick dissemination of opinion over analysis has been driving this change. Under such circumstances, truth becomes scattered, erratic, and sometimes subservient to subjective and ideological patterns.

The main venues for political discussion nowadays are social media sites such Twitter (X), Facebook, and Instagram. The first priority of their computational techniques are visibility and virality instead of emotionally relevant and easily consumed content. Public opinion is thus progressively influenced not by reasoned argument but by speed, emotion, and repetition. Visibility starts to displace legitimacy, and circulation takes front stage over verification.

This metamorphosis depends much on rhetoric. As illustrated in previous sections, political players depend on emotional language to establish credibility, draw support, and induce identification. Lilleker (2017) points out that emotional manipulation usually trumps deliberate thought in post-truth environments. Political messaging uses fear, fury, and hope as raw resources, allowing strong but maybe false narratives.

This presents major ethical questions. The circumstances for democratic communication suffer when the line separating fact from fiction gets hazy. Political leaders have to learn, Lilleker says, to strike a mix between accountability and persuasion. Although emotional language is a great tool, its abuse could lead to conflict and erode confidence in democratic institutions.

Finally, political truth in the era of post-truth serves as a flexible and contested concept rather than a set basis. Semiotic dynamics, algorithmic environments, and rhetorical devices vying for attention and credibility help to shape it: Defining political truth today requires developing discursive responsibility, increasing interpretive awareness, and restating the ethical aspect of communication inside the democratic arena.

Chapter 2: Generative AI as political actor: mediation, authority, and truth effects

If the first chapter has sought to reconstruct the architecture of contemporary political discourse by analyzing its structural forms, rhetorical mechanisms, and conditions of enunciation, the present chapter aims to explore a deeper and more disruptive transformation: the emergence of generative artificial intelligence as a new actor in the production of meaning, persuasion, and political truth. While the preceding analysis has shown how institutions, media, populist rhetorics, and digital platforms contribute to shaping public discourse, it remains to be understood how the introduction of autonomous, non-intentional, and computational systems alters the very logic through which political communication functions.

At the core of this chapter lies a simple yet disquieting premise. Artificial intelligence no longer simply facilitates political communication, it actively generates it. Generative systems such as large language models do not merely accelerate existing discursive practices; they can support the production of texts that are stylistically coherent, culturally resonant, and rhetorically persuasive. In doing so, they participate directly in the symbolic construction of political meaning. The central question is no longer whether AI alters political discourse, but how it redefines the conditions under which speech becomes believable, visible, and legitimate.

Section 2.1 opens the discussion by redefining the notion of agency within the context of computational systems. Artificial intelligence is not treated as a passive instrument, but as an actor capable of shaping meaning and producing rhetorical effects. This reconfiguration is grounded in theoretical perspectives that detach agency from subjectivity and intention, describing it instead as an emergent property of symbolic, technical, and social networks. In this light, generative systems acquire the capacity to intervene meaningfully in public discourse, not by understanding what they produce, but by structurally influencing how that production is received and interpreted.

Section 2.2 develops this insight by focusing on mediation as a discursive configuration shaped by algorithmic environments. Mediation is no longer seen as a transparent conduit between emitter and receiver, but as a networked system of constraints and affordances that modulate the visibility, structure, and interpretability of messages. Generative AI functions within this system not as a background tool, but as an algorithmic enunciator. Its outputs, while lacking authorial intention, are nonetheless received and evaluated within cultural frames that attribute to them legitimacy, coherence, and affective resonance.

Section 2.3 addresses the consequences of this paradigm shift in the domain of disinformation and public epistemology. The section argues that disinformation produced by generative AI is not the result of individual manipulation, but the consequence of systemic optimization for engagement, plausibility, and stylistic familiarity. Credibility becomes detached from origin and anchored instead in formal recognizability. Within this architecture, falsehoods gain legitimacy not despite their synthetic nature, but because of their alignment with familiar narrative and visual codes. The erosion of authorship and the automation of speech create a new discursive economy in which the status of truth is negotiated through circulation, affect, and computational repetition.

Section 2.4 introduces the conceptual framework necessary to interpret these transformations. Drawing from the notion of veridiction, the section posits that truth must be understood not as a correspondence to reality, but as the result of discursive compatibility within a given regime. Statements are recognized as true when they conform to stylistic, rhetorical, and infrastructural norms. Generative AI participates in this process by producing outputs that perform credibility through their form, position, and reiteration across platforms. The discursive effects of these utterances are not grounded in factual accuracy but in their ability to simulate communicative authority. As such, artificial intelligence becomes a central actor in the ongoing redefinition of how truth is produced, perceived, and legitimized within political communication.

Finally, Section 2.5 synthesizes these threads into a coherent critical framework. By confronting the conceptual gaps in the current literature and situating the semiotic, rhetorical, and infrastructural transformations at stake, it formulates the central research question of this

thesis:

How does generative artificial intelligence contribute to the production of political truth in contemporary discourse, and what are the epistemological and democratic consequences of its algorithmic participation in veridiction?

This question marks the transition from a descriptive mapping of AI-driven discourse to the development of a critical theory of algorithmic veridiction, which will be constructed in the following chapter.

2.1 Artificial Intelligence and Agency

The concept of artificial intelligence is notoriously fluid and historically situated. As early as the 1980s, Schank emphasized the instability of the term, arguing that it does not refer to a single, universally accepted idea. Instead, artificial intelligence is a label applied to computational attempts to simulate human faculties, particularly in situations where those faculties are not yet fully understood (Schank, 1987). This observation remains relevant today, as the emergence of generative systems has only deepened the complexity of defining what artificial intelligence truly is.

Recent attempts to define this idea draw attention on the discrepancy between public opinion and technical definitions. Jiang and his colleagues (2022) underline that restrictive technical constraints by themselves cannot adequately represent artificial intelligence, especially in its generative form. According to their research, artificial intelligence nowadays consists in highly adaptive multimodal, interactive systems functioning across verbal and visual domains. Although these systems are sometimes characterized as intelligent, their label mostly reflects their observable outputs rather than any fundamental cognitive capabilities (Jiang et al., 2022).

Philosophically, Floridi (2023) contends that modern artificial intelligence systems show agency devoid of intelligence. This perspective holds that although they lack intelligence, intentionality, or subjective awareness, artificial agents such big language models work successfully within particular circumstances, producing responses and

adjusting to human input. Their power to act in a consistent and context-sensitive manner, producing responses that significantly impact the world, makes them exceptional not for their capacity to think. This change suggests that, as originally believed, agency and intellect are no more intertwined but rather can be handled as separate attributes (Floridi, 2023).

Anthropological theory has great resonance with this reconceptualizing of agency. Agency, according to Ahearn (1999), has to be seen as a culturally and discursively located phenomena. It is a result of social interaction molded by language and symbolic practices, not alone the exercise of free choice. Agency is ingrained in structure instead of being opposed there. People exert agency not merely in opposition to accepted wisdom but also in reproduction or adaptation to it. Depending on the cultural logic in use, Ahearn also urges us to think about how agency might be ascribed to collective actors, institutions, or non-human phenomena (Ahearn, 1999).

Such knowledge questions the presumption that only humans may be agents. Denying the operational agency of artificial intelligence systems becomes more difficult when we see them acting in apparently logical, responsive, and functional manner producing words, images, or decisions in real time. As Ronge and colleagues observe, the term generative AI has emerged primarily within public and semi-technical discourse to name systems like ChatGPT, even though this term has no precise foundation in the technical literature. What matters is not the internal architecture of these systems but their perceived capacity to act meaningfully in socially relevant contexts (Ronge, Maier, and Rathgeber, 2025).

This shift in perception has far-reaching implications. If artificial intelligence can be experienced as agentive by users through natural language interaction, visual responsiveness, or adaptive behavior, then its role within communicative and political spaces must be critically examined. As agency becomes increasingly detached from consciousness and biologically grounded intentionality, it opens up the possibility that machines can participate in the formation of public meaning (Floridi, 2023; Ahearn, 1999). This does not imply that AI systems possess beliefs or motivations, but that they are structurally capable of shaping discourse, distributing attention, and modulating affect within the digital environment (Ronge, Maier, and Rathgeber, 2025).

Reframing agency in light of both semiotic and computational developments allows us to see artificial intelligence as more than a technical tool. It becomes a participant in networks of communication, legitimacy, and persuasion. This redefinition lays the groundwork for the next step in our inquiry, which is understanding how AI enters the domain of political discourse not as a neutral mediator, but as a discursive actor whose interventions affect the construction of truth and the organization of power.

2.2 Generative AI and hybrid mediation

The irruption of generative artificial intelligence into the field of political communication requires a profound redefinition of the concept of mediation, no longer conceived as a mere neutral channel between an emitting subject and a receiver, but as a semiotic device actively participating in the production of meaning. Rückriem (2009) pointed out that digital devices do not merely function as instrumental tools, but act as structuring environments capable of determining the forms of thought, action, and enunciation. In this scenario, mediation assumes the traits of a dynamic and performative field where action is no longer the exclusive prerogative of intentional subjects, but the result of distributed interactions among human and non-human actants.

Based on the capacity to generate effects inside socio-technical networks, Latour (2011) and Czarniawska (2006) helped to consolidate a relational picture of agency rather than based on psychological interiority. This viewpoint gets clear expression in Floridi (2014), who suggested the idea of an "informational agent," able of changing informational surroundings even in the absence of consciousness or intention. The author defines agency as the capacity to methodically intervene at the operational level rather than semantic comprehension.

Agency has been further disassembled within linguistic and anthropological sciences as a contextual reality molded by discursive practices and cultural conventions. Particularly Ahearn (1999) maintained that agency shows itself through language and symbolic conventions controlling behavior inside a context, not in line with personal free will. From

this, the prospect of acknowledging types of agency even in non-human actors arises since they generate obvious impacts in the communicative environment.

Starting from this theoretical reconfiguration, Peverini (2025) introduced the concept of hybrid mediation to describe communicative environments in which artificial intelligence intervenes in discursive production not as a simple transmitter of pre-existing content, but as an algorithmic co-author capable of orienting visibility, narrative structures, and interpretative affordances. Enunciation, in such contexts, no longer depends on subjectivity, but on a network of technical and rhetorical conditions that configure what can be said.

Adamo (2025), for his part, elaborated the figure of the algorithmic enunciator: a performative discursive function, devoid of conscious intentionality but capable of emulating rhetorical postures, political registers, and models of argumentative coherence. This figure asserts itself not by virtue of a subjective origin, but due to its ability to effectively mimic recognizable forms of political speech. In this sense, credibility no longer derives from the identity of the emitter, but from the structural plausibility of the utterance.

This shift has been analytically anticipated by Eco (1984), who maintained that textual comprehension does not depend on the author's intention, but on the mobilization of the cultural encyclopedia of the receiver. From this semiotic perspective, it follows that truth is not an objective datum, but the effect of an interpretive compatibility between the utterance and cultural competencies. Applied to AI, this theory implies that the persuasive success of an algorithmic utterance derives from its capacity to activate recognizable semiotic schemes, not from its factual truth.

Gillespie (2024) emphasized how generative language models tend to reproduce hegemonic discursive structures, privileging affective and argumentative grammars already sedimented in the training corpora. In this way, artificial intelligence acts as a multiplier of dominant discursive norms. Klinger and Svensson (2018), in a similar direction, showed how the algorithm is not a neutral actor, but a selection device that operates according to logics of visibility, engagement, and ideological compatibility.

In summary, if we apply these concepts to politics, generative AI does not merely intervene in the content of political discourse, but transforms its enunciative conditions. It contributes to the construction of truth not through empirical verification, but through

semiotic performativity. In an environment where authorship is opaque, subjectivity is simulated, and legitimacy is the result of algorithmic recognizability, the concept of automated veridiction becomes central to understanding the functioning of contemporary political communication.

2.2.1 The operative voice: artificial action beyond intention

The development of generative artificial intelligence causes a major theoretical rupture in the sphere of political communication, so transforming the idea of enunciation from a privilege of the deliberate subject to an operational and diffused effect. Floridi (2014) notes that informational agents identify themselves by their ability to change semantic surroundings, hence producing effects that affect cognitive, relational, and symbolic dynamics; they do not need consciousness or will to function effectively. From this angle, artificial intelligence is a completely genuine computational actor able to generate meaningful configurations inside a communicative environment, not an imperfect surrogate of the human.

Rückriem's (2009) systematic reading of technology, which rejects the notion of mediation as only transmission and stresses how digital technologies actively affect the very forms of enunciation, finds even more ground in this reconceptualizing. These are agentive environments preconfiguring what can be stated, seen, and judged credible, not neutral instruments. Under such circumstances, the political utterance results from an automated, programmed, performative process rather than from the effect of an identifiable subject.

The creation of synthetic content, such deepfakes: that is videos, images, or audio recordings created via neural networks able of simulating faces, voices, and gestures of real people with a high degree of realism represents a classic example of this transformation. Though devoid of empirical references, these objects have the ability to activate reality effects in the audience, so inducing recognition and credibility dynamics free from their actual accuracy (Finocchi, Perri & Peverini, 2023). Deepfakes thus function as kinds of automatic enunciation in which the computer not only mediates but also directly takes on the

role of discursive subject, hence redefining the conditions of symbolic authority and documentary significance.

In semiotic terms, Eco (1975) had already described this dynamic: a speech is seen as true not for its connection to facts but rather for its fit with the common encyclopedia of a specific cultural environment. By means of stylistic copying and rhetorical repetition, artificial intelligence takes advantage of this logic and generates texts that fit into known and identifiable discursive regimes.

The infrastructure logics of digital platforms also enable this kind of algorithmic veridiction, that which gradually substitutes performativity for verification. Algorithmic visibility is never neutral, as pointed out by Gillespie (2024) and Klinger and Svensson (2018), but is directed by criteria of engagement and formal coherence that prioritize stylistically conforming information. Artificial intelligence so does not just communicate but also occupies conceptual positions that are acknowledged as genuine even without purpose, subjectivity, or responsibility.

2.3 AI, disinformation, and polarization

The integration of generative artificial intelligence into political communication processes has made it necessary to radically rethink the ways in which disinformation is produced and legitimized. The traditional association between intentional falsehood and subjective responsibility, which has dominated theories of propaganda and political deception, is now challenged by generative systems capable of producing textual or audiovisual content that is coherent, plausible, and recognizable, without any direct human intentionality. According to Guess, Lyons and Nyhan (2023), the very concept of disinformation has shifted, moving from an intentional logic to a structural dynamic, in which rhetorical verisimilitude prevails over epistemic verification.

This transformation is closely linked to the operational logics of digital platforms, which as Gorwa, Katzenstein and Persily (2024) observe, act as active communicative environments that select, amplify, and hierarchies content not based on its truthfulness, but

on its ability to generate engagement, interactions, and network persistence. In this context, disinformation is no longer an anomaly, but rather an emergent product of algorithmic infrastructures oriented towards the optimization of communicative efficiency rather than the protection of truth.

In this regard, Eco (1984) had already clarified that the credibility of an utterance does not derive from its adherence to facts, but from its compatibility with the recipient's shared encyclopedia. Applying this theory to AI-generated discourse, it becomes possible to understand how content lacking factual basis can still achieve a high degree of acceptability, precisely because it activates familiar cultural frames and recognizable discursive structures.

Leipold (2016) further contributes to the understanding of this phenomenon by proposing a reconceptualization of discursive agency within policy analysis: it is no longer anchored to subjective will, but must be understood as an emergent effect of interconnected linguistic and technological practices. From this perspective, algorithmic systems can also be considered discursive actors, as they produce meaning and influence the forms of political deliberation.

Floridi (2014) introduces the concept of "infra-agency," through which he describes a form of non-intentional action that is nonetheless effective on an epistemic and social level. This concept allows us to interpret the outputs of artificial intelligence as operational communicative acts, capable of shaping perceptions and orientations even in the absence of awareness or will. This approach makes it possible to problematize the issue of responsibility: as Gorwa et al. (2024) emphasize, the attribution of responsibility becomes complex when content production cannot be traced back to a single human author, but emerges from a distributed sociotechnical assemblage.

As generative systems are trained on pre-existing corpus reflecting the cultural, ideological, and affective hierarchies already existent in the public realm, Gillespie (2024) notes finally that they tend to perpetuate dominant discursive grammars. The outcome is a type of structural deception, not connected to individual incorrect claims but rather to the spread of messages which, although seeming factual and plausible, unite preordained worldviews, exclude alternative narratives, and marginalize dissenting voices.
In view of these factors, disinformation in the era of generative artificial intelligence has to

be seen as a systematic result of semiotic recognition, algorithmic visibility, and stylistic coherence. It is much more than just a question of fake information; it's about how such material is created, given credibility, and included into regular communication techniques using opaque technology. As Eco (1975) points out, rather than thorough empirical proof, what is seen as true is often the outcome of successful discursive performativity.

2.3.1 Automated Disinformation and Discursive Authority in the Age of Generative AI

The emergence of generative artificial intelligence in the field of political communication has not only brought a new technology but also caused an epistemological change in the way disinformation is produced, justified, and acknowledged. Although historically misinformation was defined as the outcome of deliberate deceit, today—as Guess, Lyons, and Nyhan (2023) have shown—it takes the shape of a systematic effect. Large language models generate processes ideal for stylistic consistency and engagement, not the result of deliberate deception. Under this new discursive government, credibility is mostly determined by plausible rather than by truth. Disinformation thus emerges as a hybrid phenomenon, rooted both in the algorithmic structures of generative systems and in the deliberate intentions of human agents who strategically exploit them.

The operation of digital platforms is inextricably related with this metamorphosis. Online environments, as Gorwa, Katzenstein, and Persily (2024) underline, are media architectures that choose and rank material depending on algorithmic measures aimed toward engagement, persistence, and virality, not neutral venues for informational exchange. Under these circumstances, disinformation no longer appears as a pathological anomaly but rather as a functional outcome of the networked efficiency model encouraged by the platforms themselves. This includes both the algorithmic amplification of biased content, arising unintentionally from the statistical training of generative models, and the intentional, manipulative use of artificial intelligence to produce false or misleading outputs, such as

deepfakes. In both forms, disinformation is magnified not based on its epistemic reliability, but on its stylistic coherence and capacity to attract attention within platform-driven logics.

Interpretive semiotics offers a robust theoretical framework for understanding the dynamics of textual credibility. Eco (1984), with his theory of the cultural encyclopedia, emphasized that an utterance is not judged as credible solely on the basis of its factual truth but rather by its ability to activate shared interpretive frameworks and collective semiotic memory. In this context, generative systems construct texts that align with sedimented discursive patterns, reiterating linguistic and rhetorical structures acquired during training. However, this process does not unfold in isolation. As Dondero (2025) has shown, such productions are better understood as acts of co-enunciation, wherein the final discursive product emerges from the interplay between algorithmic generation and human prompting. This enunciative configuration implies a redistribution of agency: the machine does not possess autonomy but contributes actively within a semiotic network where human and non-human components jointly shape meaning. What results is a simulation of discursive authority, where the plausibility of form tends to substitute for the authenticity of authorship.

Montoro-Montarroso et al. (2023) advise reading generative AI as a discursive tool that not only generates language but also helps redefine the very circumstances under which a speech is considered as authoritative. Under this paradigm, the traditional concept of the author gives place to an algorithmic function competent of generating texts with performative force just because of their conformity to known rhetorical models and culturally recognized patterns. Authoritativeness results from the interaction of style coherence, platform affordances, and interpretive expectations; it is not derived in a deliberate subject.

From this vantage point, Leipold (2016) presents the idea of discursive agency as a phenomena resulting from linked language and technology activities rather than as a personal attribute. In this sense, an algorithmic system could also be seen as a discursive actant since it shapes public opinion and the boundaries of democratic discussion by intervening in the formation of meanings. Agency is characterized by the capacity to modify the interpretative horizon, not by subjective intentionality anymore.

Following this perspective, Floridi (2014) introduces the idea of infra-agency, which is seen as a kind of efficient activity even in the lack of knowledge or will. Since their

linguistic emissions have actual consequences on cognitive and social surroundings, the author argues that generative systems can be regarded in every sense as informative agents. From this point of view, the traditional connection between intention, responsibility, and communicative action is challenged. Should content be able to influence attitudes, decisions, and collective perceptions, the question of responsibility cannot be limited to individual intention but rather must be framed inside a complex and distributed sociotechnical assemblage (Gorwa et al., 2024).

At last, Gillespie (2024) emphasizes how subtly normative algorithmic discourse production is. Trained on datasets reflecting current ideological hierarchies, generative AIs often reproduce and support dominant grammars while marginalizing alternative or counter-hegemonic viewpoints. In this way, misinformation becomes systematic rather than resulting from individual lies since it stabilizes pre-existing worldviews and replays them with the seeming neutrality of automation. What results is a process of automated veridiction, giving what is algorithmically apparent, rhetorically fluid, and culturally recognizable authority.

In essence, false information in the era of generative artificial intelligence cannot be considered as a minor or deviant phenomena. It has to be seen as the result of a complicated interaction among semiotic architectures, discursive practices, and technical instruments that significantly change the environment of political communication. In this new situation, truth asserts itself by formal and cultural fit with dominant patterns of meaning rather than by consistency with facts.

2.4 Reframing truth-making in technological contexts

Today, generative artificial intelligence resides in the communicative domain not as a passive relay of pre-structured information but rather as a discursive agent able to shape meaning, power, and public belief. This metamorphosis questions the very processes by which assertions acquire epistemic legitimacy and are socially acknowledged as true, not only regarding the shape or amount of knowledge flowing in digital environments. Long

linked to ideas of empirical correspondence or propositional validity, the idea of truth finds itself being reframed as the consequence of rhetorical, aesthetic, and infrastructure processes.

Engaging the semiotic idea of veridiction, a concept first proposed by Greimas as a meaning effect, the discursive mechanism via which a proposition is seen as true inside a system of meaning, helps one negotiate this change. Veridiction addresses the fit of a speech with the codes, norms, and interpretive expectations that control a certain cultural area, not with reference to objective reality. By stressing that what a society accepts as "truth" is always the result of historically placed diapositives networks of knowledge, power, and discourse, that define what may be stated, by whom, and under what conditions Foucault extended this framework in a genealogical direction.

Artificial intelligence when operating in conjunction with human intention through a process of co-enunciation (Dondero, 2025) becomes a creator of truth effects in this theoretical perspective not because it reveals reality but rather because it makes utterances that fit stylistic, lexical, and rhetorical patterns the system already accepts as legitimate. These speeches persuade by formal plausible language and structural repetition; they do not persuade by evidence. As Floridi contends, informational agents behave meaningfully even in the lack of intentionality. Whether they have consciousness or volition, their influences on epistemic surroundings are actual. What counts is not the presence of a speaker but rather the flow of speech that seems to be written, located, and normally aligned with the communicative expectations of its audience.

The study of political language suffers great difficulties with this reconceptualization of truth as the result of algorithmic calibration and discursive performance. What is perceived as honest now depends on how smoothly a message fits into the semiotic regime of recognizability, repetition, and rhetorical conformance, not alone on factual content or logical consistency. Not because it understands, but rather because it is designed to replicate, artificial intelligence, trained on enormous corpus of culturally weighted language reproduces and amplifies dominant forms of communication. The outcome is a communicative environment in which truth is designed rather than confirmed; not discovered but rather performed.

2.4.1 Algorithmic Veridiction: The Discursive Production of Truth

In the context of contemporary political communication, truth can no longer be understood as a stable entity or as a simple correspondence between statement and reality. Instead, it assumes the form of a discursive effect, whose status depends on a complex set of rhetorical, institutional, and technological conditions. Within this perspective, the concept of *veridiction* offers a crucial interpretive framework. Originally introduced by Greimas (1983) in *Du sens II* as a semiotic device that attributes truth-value to a statement within a structured system of narrative positions, the concept was later rearticulated by Michel Foucault (2001) from a genealogical standpoint, to describe the social and institutional conditions that make truth-telling possible within a given discursive regime.

For Foucault, every society elaborates its own "regimes of truth," that is, ensembles of practices, institutions, and authorities that determine what can be said, by whom, and with what consequences. Truth, in this framework, is never an objective fact but a political function, an effect of performative discourse sanctioned by systems of power. As Blanco (2018) observes, Foucault's idea of truth lies on the boundary between fiction and assertion, between symbolic authority and desire: it is through language that reality is continuously rewritten, ordered, and rendered legitimate.

With the emergence of digital media, this view becomes newly relevant. The advent of generative artificial intelligence, capable of autonomously producing statements without intention or consciousness, forces us to ask who now holds the power to assert what is true. A central role in this dynamic is played by digital infrastructures, which determine the conditions of visibility and circulation of statements. Gillespie (2024) demonstrates how algorithmic criteria for content selection and ranking impose a "grammar of credibility," in which stylistic familiarity, rhetorical coherence, and reproducibility replace traditional mechanisms of verification. Similarly, Klinger and Svensson (2018) emphasize that digital platforms are far from neutral spaces, they perform a normative function by defining which discursive forms are recognized as legitimate and which are excluded or marginalized.

In summary, algorithmic veridiction can be interpreted as a new regime of truth-production, in which artificial intelligence is not merely a content generator, but a semiotic actor capable of intervening in the domain of the sayable. In this scenario, truth is no longer what corresponds to a fact, but what, through algorithmic mediation, is recognized as true by a system of shared codes and reiterated discursive performances. What is at stake is not merely epistemological, but deeply political: determining who has the power to speak the truth today requires an interrogation of the digital architectures that enable such an act.

In this landscape, the political domain emerges as one of the most susceptible to the epistemological destabilization wrought by non-human informational agents. The integration of generative artificial intelligence (AI) into political communication circuits not only accelerates the dissemination of content but also transforms the epistemic foundations upon which such content is evaluated. According to the Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2023, a significant number of respondents, particularly in the US and UK, express discomfort with news generated by AI, especially concerning sensitive topics like politics. This unease underscores a communicative environment where plausibility often replaces verifiability as the primary standard of truth[4].

This phenomenon contributes to what van Dijck, Poell, and de Waal (2018) describe as the "platform society," wherein algorithmic infrastructures displace traditional journalistic authority, and visibility metrics function as proxies for credibility. Within such a regime, generative AI operates as a distributed semiotic actor—not requiring intentionality, yet fully capable of reshaping discursive fields through computational optimization. This shift carries significant consequences for democratic accountability: when the provenance of statements becomes opaque and their circulation governed by predictive logics, the conditions for attributing political responsibility are fundamentally undermined.

Furthermore, as Zuboff (2023) argues, AI systems, through their pervasive data collection and analysis, contribute to the erosion of a shared public sphere by creating individualized information environments. Post-truth, in this framework, is not merely a crisis of referentiality but a structural transformation of the cognitive environment in which

[4] https://www.reuters.com/technology/artificial-intelligence/global-audiences-suspicious-ai-powered-newsrooms-report-finds-2024-06-16/

political veridiction occurs. What we are witnessing is not simply a battle between competing narratives but also a war between informational architectures, where AI can act as an ideological infrastructure capable of automating and amplifying partisan discourses.

2.4.2 The infrastructure of believability: AI, platforms, and normative visibility

The discursive authority of generative artificial intelligence does not emerge in a vacuum. It is embedded within an infrastructure that not only enables but also modulates the ways in which political utterances are produced, circulated, and recognized as legitimate. If the previous section has established that truth, in the context of AI-driven communication, operates as an effect of veridiction rather than as a correspondence to external facts, it becomes necessary to examine how this effect is sustained by the material and algorithmic architecture of the digital public sphere. The credibility of a statement, especially when generated by a non-human agent, depends not only on its content or form, but on the conditions of its visibility, repetition, and placement within hierarchies of attention.

Gillespie (2024), in his penetrating critique of platform dynamics, makes clear that visibility is never neutral. What appears on the screen is not the result of random exposure, but of a set of infrastructural decisions encoded in ranking algorithms, recommendation systems, and interface design. These mechanisms, while often perceived as technical or operational, are in fact semiotic agents that shape what is seen, when it is seen, and in what context. Gillespie argues that the structure of the platform configures a normative regime in which certain utterances are systematically rendered more credible than others, not because of their truth-value, but because of their proximity to pre-established patterns of believability. The effect of this design is to naturalize specific modes of discourse and to marginalize alternatives that do not conform to the algorithmically recognized norms.

This insight is particularly relevant when considering how AI-generated content is received. The authority of a message does not stem solely from what it says. It also derives from where it appears, how it is formatted, and how it resonates with prior discursive patterns.

A statement produced by a generative model and integrated seamlessly into the visual and semantic architecture of a platform may be perceived as trustworthy even in the absence of any identifiable source. This is not an incidental feature of algorithmic mediation. It is the result of an infrastructure that equates stylistic consistency, visual polish, and contextual familiarity with rhetorical legitimacy.

The infrastructural dynamics that underpin AI-generated discourse reveal a profound decoupling of credibility from human intentionality. As Huszár et al. (2022) demonstrate, algorithmic recommendation systems on platforms like Twitter (X) systematically amplify certain political content over others, independent of the content's factual accuracy or the authority of its source. This amplification is not a neutral process; rather, it reflects the underlying design choices of the platform's algorithms, which prioritize engagement metrics over epistemic value. Consequently, AI-generated political discourse gains visibility and, by extension, perceived credibility, not through traditional markers of trustworthiness, but through alignment with the platform's algorithmic preferences. In addiction Huszár et al. (2022) notice how this dynamic challenges conventional notions of authenticity and authority in political communication, positioning algorithmic design as a central arbiter of discursive legitimacy.

Klinger and Svensson (2018), with their analysis of algorithmic agency, reinforce this line of reasoning. They argue that in contemporary media systems, authority is no longer necessarily linked to institutional roles or human actors, but is distributed across algorithmic functions that govern visibility, repetition, and engagement. These functions, while ostensibly technical, perform a normative role. They decide what deserves to be seen and heard, and by doing so, they contribute to the construction of truth effects. In their view, generative AI fits into this apparatus not as a separate agent, but as an intensifier of existing dynamics. It provides a constant supply of content that conforms to platform-optimized standards, thereby reinforcing the credibility of statements whose origins may be unknown or synthetic.

The convergence of these perspectives reveals a profound transformation in the conditions of political communication. Truth no longer emerges from deliberation or verification alone. It is increasingly produced through the choreography of infrastructure.

What is believed is not only what is said clearly or argued well, but what appears at the top of a feed, what is shared by recognizable avatars, what is embedded in aesthetically coherent formats, and what resonates with the stylistic filters imposed by recommendation systems. In such an environment, generative AI becomes not merely a producer of statements, but a participant in the design of what counts as truth.

What emerges is a discursive environment in which truth is no longer adjudicated through epistemic criteria, but rendered operational through design. The legitimacy of political speech is produced not at the level of enunciation, but within the platform's capacity to frame visibility, aesthetic fluency, and affective resonance. In this architecture, generative AI is not merely a generator of messages, it is a machinic actor in the engineering of belief, embedded in the logistical circuits where political truth is increasingly choreographed, aestheticized, and infrastructurally enforced.

2.5 Rethinking political truth in the age of generative discourse

What has emerged throughout this chapter is a landscape in which political communication is no longer reducible to the interaction between human agents, institutional apparatuses, and media technologies. Instead, we are increasingly confronted with discursive environments in which artificial systems participate autonomously in the production of meaning, the orchestration of affect, and the organization of credibility. The truth-effect, once anchored in the dialectic between intention and verification, now appears to be the result of computational operations, platform logics, and semiotic routines that operate without consciousness or accountability. Generative artificial intelligence, in this framework, does not merely transmit information or reproduce ideological frames. It produces discursive configurations that are treated as real, believed as true, and acted upon as politically meaningful.

Each of the previous sections has progressively clarified how generative artificial intelligence operates within the construction of political meaning. Section 2.1 reframed AI as a form of agency, capable of intervening in discursive contexts without subjectivity or intention, yet still producing meaningful effects. Section 2.2 deepened this reflection by

presenting mediation not as a neutral channel, but as an infrastructural and semiotic process in which AI contributes to the configuration of what can be said, seen, and legitimized. Section 2.3 examined the production of disinformation as a structural outcome of algorithmic environments, highlighting how credibility and visibility are shaped by systemic conditions rather than by authorship or factual accuracy. Finally, Section 2.4 introduced the notion of veridiction as a discursive mechanism, showing how truth emerges from patterns of circulation, recognition, and performative coherence within digitally governed regimes of communication. What remains, however, is an unresolved and urgent theoretical gap.

While the existing literature has successfully described the rhetorical, affective, and infrastructural dimensions of AI-mediated communication, it has yet to provide a systematic account of how political truth is constructed when the speaker is artificial, the platform is normative, and the public is algorithmically fragmented. In particular, there is a striking absence of critical models capable of theorizing the operations of generative AI not simply as communication, but as veridictional performance. What does it mean for a machine to speak politically, not by error or coincidence, but as a participant in the shaping of what is considered true? What are the epistemological, ethical, and democratic implications of a discursive regime in which the authority to enunciate truth can be simulated, formatted, and reproduced by systems optimized for plausibility rather than for accuracy or deliberation?

The question that guides this thesis can now be formulated as follows:

How does generative artificial intelligence contribute to the production of political truth in contemporary discourse, and what are the epistemological and democratic consequences of its algorithmic participation in veridiction processes?

This question does not aim to moralize or demonize artificial discourse. Rather, it seeks to make visible the modes of power, knowledge, and legitimacy that are being reconfigured by its presence. It recognizes that AI does not speak in a vacuum, but within infrastructures that condition the reception, credibility, and uptake of its utterances. It also acknowledges that traditional criteria for assessing political truth: intention, verification,

public accountability, may no longer suffice in environments where discourse is generated, distributed, and believed through mechanisms that evade such categories.

The next chapter will respond to this question not by proposing a normative solution, but by elaborating a critical theory of algorithmic veridiction. This theory will aim to conceptualize the specific ways in which AI-generated political materials acquire rhetorical force, political effect, and epistemic status in a post-human communicative space. It will also seek to identify the points at which such discourse can be contested, reappropriated, or redirected toward democratic ends. For if veridiction is no longer anchored in the human subject, then the task of critique is no longer to defend the sovereignty of speech, but to understand the configurations through which truth is now assembled, circulated, and enforced.

Chapter 3: Generative AI as a discursive actor: case studies in algorithmic veridiction

The first two chapters of this thesis have set the theoretical and conceptual framework required to grasp political debate in the era of algorithmic mediation. Chapter 1 rebuilt the semiotic and rhetorical architecture of political language, showing how political speech serves not only as a means of information delivery but also as a symbolic operation competent of generating legitimacy, mobilization, and belief. Then Chapter 2 introduced generative artificial intelligence as a new actor in this symbolic realm, stressing how computational systems may operate viscously without consciousness, intention, or ethical awareness. Examined through the prism of Greimas, Foucault, Floridi, and more modern academics like Adamo and Peverini, the concept of veridiction became crucial in understanding how truth is no longer proven but performed inside digitally mediated environments.

A turning point in the evolution of the thesis is this third chapter. From theoretical conception to practical examination, it looks at how generative artificial intelligence generates political functioning discursive materials. This chapter concentrates on how AI-generated outputs execute authority, acquire credibility, and circulate as political speech, not on technological innovation per such. It questions not what these objects are but rather what they do: how they interact in symbolic regimes, how they are identified as significant, and how they help to shape what society regards as true.

First presenting a methodological framework based on semiotics and the philosophy of information, the chapter then seeks this investigation. Drawing on Greimas's theory of enunciation, Floridi's idea of infra-agency, and the more recent ideas of hybrid mediation and algorithmic enunciator elaborated respectively by Peverini and Adamo, it defines the analytical coordinates through which artificial utterances might be read as rhetorically and politically effective. Two well chosen case studies: the AI-generated video released by Donald Trump imagining a futuristic reconstruction of Gaza and the deepfake video falsely showing President Zelensky urging Ukrainian troops to surrender, re then subjected to these instruments.

These two objects are examined not just as media events. They are understood as discursive interventions exposing how generative artificial intelligence transforms political imagination, legitimacy, and credibility conditions. Examined in light of their semiotic configuration, rhetorical function, and infrastructural distribution, each case reveals how artificial systems may copy institutional designs, hold speaker roles, and create belief effects over digital networks.

This chapter so seeks to show that generative artificial intelligence engages in performative architecture rather than merely mimics political speech. Studying the mechanics of algorithmic veridiction using real-world examples helps one to create the foundation for the critical conclusions that will be reached in the last chapter, where normative, epistemological, and democratic consequences will be extensively addressed.

3.1 Methodological framing: tools for a semiotic-discursive research

Analyzing AI-generated material requires more than just descriptive observation in a time when non-human technologies progressively influence the production of political speech. It calls for a disciplined theoretical and methodological approach able to grasp how automated processes generate rhetorical authority, credibility, and meaning. This section describes the interpretive tools applied in order to guide the research of the two selected case studies. The first is the emergence of a modified deepfake video of Volodymyr Zelensky the second revolves on a politically sensitive comment attributed to Donald Trump on the Gaza crisis produced by artificial intelligence. Both situations are considered as discursive productions that have to be explored in terms of their placement, reception, and legitimization inside digital environments as well as in terms of what they say.

Building on the theoretical premises already established in the previous chapters, the methodology adopted here does not aim to reconfirm the foundational categories of enunciation, veridiction, or informational agency. Instead, it seeks to operationalize them within a concrete analytical framework capable of dissecting the inner workings of AI-

generated discourse. This framework is articulated according to the generative semiotic model, which allows for a multilayered reading of discursive phenomena through three integrated levels of analysis: the surface level, the narrative level, and the axiological level. Each of these strata contributes to elucidating how AI-generated content not only simulates political language but actively intervenes in the symbolic organization of the public sphere.

At the surface level, attention is directed to the formal and stylistic devices employed by the artefact, including visual composition, mise-en-scène, symbolic markers, rhythm, and aesthetic conventions. These elements are not ornamental. They function as semiotic strategies that render the artefact recognizable as legitimate political speech. In AI-generated videos, such strategies simulate institutional familiarity, allowing the output to mimic the genre expectations of news, campaign messaging, or presidential address. This simulation does not merely trigger recognition but pre-structures the interpretive framework through which the utterance is received.

The narrative level focuses on the internal logic and progression of meaning. It examines how sequences, transitions, and syntagmatic arrangements articulate a coherent political imaginary. This layer is crucial for understanding how artificial outputs replicate or reconfigure established narrative grammars, such as those of resistance, redemption, or collapse. Through narrative coherence and the orchestration of familiar ideological roles, the artefact constructs a discursive world that aligns with audience expectations, even in the absence of propositional accuracy. The persuasive strength of the message thus emerges not from what is argued, but from how the storyline aligns with dominant semiotic templates.

The axiological level interrogates the value structures implicitly activated or subverted within the artefact. This includes the ideological reversals, normative reframing, and symbolic hierarchies that shape the moral and cultural texture of the discourse. Rather than articulating explicit statements, AI-generated content often mobilizes value oppositions by reorienting visual and narrative signs toward new ethical configurations. What is traditionally coded as resistance may become framed as recklessness. What is seen as devastation may be re-signified as potential. The axiological layer thus reveals the deeper ideological operations at play in algorithmically produced enunciations.

Together, these three levels form an interpretive grid through which each case study is analyzed not as a static media object but as a dynamic node within a broader semiotic economy. The goal is not to assess intention or truth-value. Instead, the focus is on how plausibility, affect, and recognizability are orchestrated to produce discursive authority. The political function of these texts lies precisely in their ability to occupy the space of legitimate speech without fulfilling the traditional requirements of authorial intent or empirical validation.

By applying this analytical strategy, the research moves beyond surface-level readings of deepfakes or AI-generated propaganda. It engages with the symbolic mechanisms through which artificial discourse performs the work of legitimacy, constructs frames of interpretation, and circulates with rhetorical force. In a communicative environment increasingly shaped by synthetic production and algorithmic amplification, this model provides the necessary semiotic tools to critically evaluate the emergent forms of political veridiction.

This strategy provides a whole prism through which one could understand generative artificial intelligence as a discursive actor. Through the simulation of discursive authority, the exploitation of platform logics, and the reproduction of rhetorically familiar forms, it helps one to identify patterns via which non-human systems participate in the production of political meaning, not through conscious speech. Beyond evaluation of their factual accuracy, the study underlines how AI-generated writings function, circulate, and are socially accepted as real or believable inside the symbolic architecture of modern political discourse.

By means of this analytical approach, AI-generated political material is examined as a discursive node located inside a relational web of symbolic, algorithmic, and infrastructure coordinates rather than as an isolated artefact. This setting will help us to approach the two chosen case studies, both current and extensively shared in the scene of worldwide media. Their goal is to show how generative artificial intelligence replicates forms of enunciative legitimacy and modulates belief via aesthetic, computational, and affective mechanisms, so exposing how it interacts in processes of political meaning-making. As will be clear, the mechanisms by which a political remark becomes plausible, repeatable, and functionally true define what is at stake, not the intention behind that utterance.

3.2 From simulation to political force: analyzing the Zelensky deepfake

During the first phases of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in March 2022[5], we saw one of the first and most iconic examples of political deepfake.

Starting on Telegram, Facebook, and VKontakte, a synthetic film featuring a fake President Volodymyr Zelensky exhorted Ukrainian troops to drop their weapons. First showing on a hacked news channel, the footage quickly went throughout media before being officially refuted by Ukrainian officials and foreign journalists. The tape, despite its brief run in popularity, attracted a lot of attention and momentarily entered the metaphorical battlefield of the war.

Visually, the person presents the message in a calm and official manner, wearing military attire, stands against a neutral background including national emblems. These images are not incidental. Their reproduction of the culturally defined marks of legitimacy and leadership sets the spectator in a shared framework of interpretation. The visual language reflects that of presidential speeches, therefore creating a familiarity that gives the message credibility even without institutional source.

From a narrative standpoint, the speech reinterpreted the continuous conflict as a miscalculation rather than creates a heroic story of resistance. The language substitutes terminology of tiredness and personal preservation for the rhetoric of endurance. The

[5] [5] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X17yrEV5sl4

message emphasizes affective appeal rather than trying to persuade by means of argumentation; it presents resignation as a logical and compassionate decision. This inversion of story logic simulates the public abdication of national endurance, therefore weakening its symbolic capital.

Deeper further, the film flips basic principles ingrained in military propaganda. Collective sacrifice and patriotic endurance have long been raised as moral requirements. Those principles are displaced in this simulation toward pragmatic submission and personal safety. The individual shown in the video gives more of a man giving up than of a leader ordering resistance. This change throws a disturbance into the axiological framework supporting political legitimacy and provides a new hierarchy whereby submission seems ethically better than struggle.

Structurally, the video exhibits what has been spoken in earlier chapters as a pseudo-enunciation. It replicas the formal components of political communication without any subjective source. Though the utterance moves, generates reactions, and changes public opinion, there is no genuine speaker behind the message. Its rhetorical force resides in its conformance to the accepted aesthetic, chronological, and discursive forms of presidential communication, not in its content. The deepfake gets popularity since it mimics the symbolic environment in which institutional truth is usually created.

This scenario shows how generating systems could act in the discursive field without stating intention or belief. What moves is a performative credibility gesture rather than a factual claim. The deepfake inhabits the symbolic form of the credible, not by persuading the public of its truth. It shows how in digital contexts one can trigger the awareness of authority outside of authenticity.

This story ultimately demonstrates how generative artificial intelligence can function not only as an instrument of deceit but also as a force inside the symbolic economy of political debate. Even in the lack of empirical basis, it reproduces the signals of leadership and power sufficiently to have transient discursive impacts. What shows before the audience is a simulation to be experienced and immediately embraced, not a deception to be taken in mind. Though it lacks referential meaning, the deepfake executes the structure of truth, so it becomes a politically powerful assertion.

On the left, the deepfake; on the right, the original video that is presumed to have been modified.

3.2.1 Discursive authority and the infrastructure of political credibility

The Zelensky deepfake is a striking case study for how trust in political communication could be created free from institutional authorship or factual basis. Not the validity of its source, but rather the accuracy with which it reproduces the discursive and aesthetic rules of institutional communication, lets such a synthetic utterance momentarily occupy the symbolic realm of authorized speech. Visual framing, tone of voice, tempo, and setting all fit the pre-configured expectations of the audience about the appearance and sound of a presidential speech. This alignment generates a truth effect not because the content is verifiable but rather because it is technically consistent with the semiotic structure of authoritative speech.

This result exposes a more general change in the semiotic logic of political legitimacy. Instead of anchored in institutional responsibilities or speaker identity, legitimacy becomes a function of recognizability and circulation. The message is taken as maybe true based on agreement with accepted communicative norms rather than any proof. In this sense, credibility loses its epistemological relevance and turns into a rhetorical and structural result.

The film aimed not for conventional argument, explanation, or persuasion. Simulating its visual and discursive shape gave it authority. Its success came from its performative

fluidity rather than from its narrative coherence. These kinds of events can suddenly create political weight even in a situation when public attention is governed by visibility, repetition, and immediacy and discredit is discounted.

This mechanism runs in a digital context that gives speed, virality, and emotional effect top priority. The deepfake fit the affordances of this ecology. It was brief, physically pleasing, emotionally intense, and readily shared. These qualities helped it to be quickly shared, therefore producing what can be considered a transient discursive presence. Its relevance measured not in fact-checking but in involvement. Algorithmic infrastructures so serve as filters and amplifiers of political meaning as well as channels.

Most importantly, the short lifetime of the video does not lessen its importance. On the other hand, it exposes how authority in digital communication is more detached from time or validation. More crucial than endurance or confirmation is the potential to seem, connect, and set off response. Synthetic claims can create instantaneous interpretive tension in this compressed temporality, therefore public actors must clarify, deny, or reply.

This phenomena points to a more general restructuring of political debate perception and evaluation. Computational enunciation replaces the figure of the speaker, usually connected with institutional ethos. What counts is not the speaker but rather how the speech fits into the institutional legitimacy symbolic framework. Recognition turns from identity into something grounded in form. Authority now serves more as semiotic compatibility than as a consequence of presence.

The Zelensky deepfake thus represents a specific manifestation of a more general change in discursive dynamics. It illustrates how generative technologies actively participate in the creation of political meaning. Their conformational behavior makes their outputs suddenly strong not because they persuade. In this perspective, the deepfake is not an anomaly but rather a sign of a communicative context in which simulation, infrastructure, and performance progressively shapes rhetorical credibility.

3.3 Trump's Gaza video and the semiotics of AI-driven spectacle

Former U.S. President Donald Trump posted a video[6] on his Social and Instagram accounts in February 2025 that attracted fast international media attention.

Originally produced by a pro-Trump content producer, the artificial intelligence movie showed a fantastical metamorphosis of Gaza into a gleaming economic utopia. The scene was dominated by beaches loaded with golden buildings, luxurious hotels, and lounge chairs. At the middle of the frame stood a huge Trump Tower topped with American flags. Walking together and surveilling the rebuilt Gaza Strip, the film also showed hyper realistic depictions of Elon Musk, former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and Jared Kushner. The soundtrack included victorious and renewing themes reinforced by triumphal music. At the end, a brief note said that under Western direction and branding, rehabilitation will bring forth peace and prosperity for the area.

Though the producer of the video later stated it was satirical in character, Trump's redistribution of it lacked critical framework or irony. This gesture refocused the film inside a politically serious and symbolic setting, therefore turning a parodic provocation into a

[6] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IkKk96QAk1k

possible ideological declaration (Paul, 2025). Trump's presentation of the material free from disclaimers positioned it inside his larger discursive arsenal as a valid story of global vision.

Media academics as well as political analysts criticized this episode extensively; many of them saw the film as a perfect illustration of algorithmic propaganda. Analysts observed that it created a hyperreal show that surpassed Gaza's actual damaged state by conflict and humanitarian crisis, that is, lived reality (Chiang, 2025). The Economist called the video launching a new political communication genre based on cinematic simulation and emotional appeal rather than clear logic (The Economist, 2025). This meant that the video needed not to be factual in order to be politically strong. The symbolic familiarity of its narrative codes and the plausible aesthetic grammar helped to define its performative effect.

From a semiotic standpoint, the film runs through what Eco (1974) would term as overdosing, where meaning is soaked through visual symbolism, cultural archetypes, and repeated action. The substance of the film is anchored inside a common symbolic encyclopedia by the grandeur of the architectural drawings, the golden color palette, and the inclusion of well-known people from the tech and political spheres.

The video opens with what appear to be authentic documentary scenes of war-torn Gaza, though they are entirely AI-generated. A green caption reading “Gaza, 2025” situates the viewer in a near future still marked by destruction. The frame is saturated with signs of conflict: collapsed buildings, smoldering ruins, and a desaturated color palette evoke a familiar visual archive of crisis. Suddenly, the screen flashes the words “What comes next” in bold red and blue. The camera then moves through a digital archway, a symbolic portal, transitioning from devastation to a utopian beachfront. This narrative shift, executed entirely through visual sequencing, suspends critical reflection and constructs a rhetorical arc that bypasses argumentation. It guides the viewer from ruin to renewal not through logical reasoning but through an affective, immersive spectacle that simulates transformation.

At the center of this transformation stand Donald Trump and Elon Musk, who occupy the most prominent visual positions throughout the video. Alongside them, Benjamin Netanyahu and Jared Kushner also appear briefly. None of these figures speak, yet their central framing, composed gestures, and deliberate movements function as visual acts of enunciation. Their presence alone communicates authority, reinforcing the illusion of

political and technological legitimacy. The video does not narrate; it performs. The symbolic grammar unfolds through architecture, light, and gesture, assembling a scene of redemption anchored in recognizable signs of American grandeur. Trump-branded skyscrapers rise along a redesigned coastline, while beachgoers lounge beneath a placid sky. These visual elements construct a coherent mythology of salvation, where destruction is not mourned but aestheticized, and recovery is imagined as a spectacle of Western intervention. The rhetorical force of the video lies not in its coherence with empirical reality but in its strategic orchestration of familiar signs that naturalize domination through the language of prosperity.

Beneath the polished aesthetic and symbolic coherence lies a profound axiological inversion. The values traditionally associated with resistance, sovereignty, and mourning are subtly replaced by ideals of consumption, spectacle, and aesthetic control. The transition from war to leisure, from rubble to resorts, does not suggest reconciliation or justice but reprograms the value system underpinning the conflict itself. Peace is not negotiated but visually imposed. Reconstruction is not collective but privatised. In this narrative, the trauma of war becomes a backdrop for entrepreneurial triumph, and political agency is transferred from the people affected to the figure who dominates the screen. What is promoted is not coexistence but pacification, understood not as a negotiated resolution of conflict, but as the imposition of order through symbolic and infrastructural dominance, not dignity but profitability. The beach, the tower, the skyline, all function as signs of a symbolic order in which suffering is overwritten by profitability, and legitimacy is aesthetic rather than ethical. The video does not invite critical engagement but offers ideological consolation, naturalising a value system in which visibility and wealth stand in for justice and truth.

Elon Musk, Netanyahu, and Kushner's involvement gave still more symbolic weight. These figures were carefully selected to represent economic restructuring, geopolitical power, and invention rather than haphazard insertion. Presented without any explanation, their AI-generated likenesses traversing a calm, reconstructed Gaza landscape communicated a message of technical redemption and Western supremacy. By allowing viewers to project their own interpretations, this wordless performance depended on visual inference, therefore avoiding the requirement for argumentative justification.

The Trump Gaza video is ultimately not only a digital provocation or a visual curiosity. It is a political event by itself. It shows how artificial intelligence helps to create rhetorical artefacts that mimic authority, generate ideological consequences, and evade conventional lines of responsibility. As such, it exemplifies a case of algorithmic veridiction, where truth does not emerge through factual declaration or evidentiary demonstration, but is instead enacted and circulated through stylistic performance, symbolic coherence, and affective alignment.

3.3.1 From aesthetic plausibility to discursive legitimacy

The Trump Gaza AI-generated video offers a pertinent illustration of how synthetic content may engage political debate without representing a real and plausible scenario. The video travels as a significant political statement even though it offers no factual assertions. This move from deliberate communication to performative simulation and exposes a fundamental change in the dynamics of discursive validity. Through the consistency of its visual narrative, its connection with symbolic expectations, and its integration into digital infrastructures built for speed and resonance. The video persuasively argues rather than by logical reasoning.

Understanding the rhetorical impact of the video depends on knowing its structure. It starts with AI-generated visuals of war-torn Gaza accompanied by a green caption, "Gaza, 2025." Next in red and blue is the sentence "What Comes Next." The scenario moves from conflict to utopia as seen by beaches, golden towers, and American flags dominating the terrain in a visual transition under an archway. The metamorphosis is executed visually, suggesting a symbolic resolution rather than told. Trump and Elon Musk are the main characters; Jared Kushner, and Benjamin Netanyahu appear briefly in supporting roles as it is shown stately traversing this rebuilt paradise. Although their presence supports ideas of riches, diplomacy, and technical innovation, Trump is still clearly the carrier of vision and order. This rhetorical device simulates what Greimas would characterize as a *pseudo-enunciation*, whereby the presence of an actor and the structure of institutional speech are replicated to generate a truth effect.

With great visual refinement, slow cinematic pace, and aspirational symbolism, the film follows the visual rules of campaign ads and real estate advertising. These components, read through Eco's notion of the Cultural Encyclopedia, activate common interpretative frames: American branding communicates worldwide dominance, palm palms suggest peace, and gold suggests affluence. The outcome is a performance that begs to be acknowledged rather than a statement to be confirmed. At the narrative level, the film redefines destruction as opportunity rather than loss and substitutes ambition for grief. It implies that market-led resuscitation rather than political restoration marks what follows disaster.

This ideological change is ingrained in a familiar genre, the story of American entrepreneurial redemption, so it requires no justification. Not argumentative power, but rather aesthetic fluency helps one to internalize the message. Axiologically, the film subverts conventional warfare values. It replaces sovereignty with corporate order with resistance with rebuilding. Though it is not denied, the historical and still-present pain of Gaza is eclipsed by an imagined future in which luxury and branding cover trauma. This inversion of value is made feasible just since the medium itself suspends the need for authorship: without a speaker, only a picture to understand is held liable.

The legitimacy of the video derives from its capacity to occupy a symbolic framework with affectively compelling cultural legibility. In this view, not deliberation but rather design and repetition allow generative systems to create discursive authority. The Trump Gaza video best illustrates this. It reveals that in the present media environment, what counts is not whether something is genuine but rather if it appears like it may be.

3.4 Toward the algorithmic veridiction

Analyzing the two chosen situations helps one to see how generative artificial intelligence systems may function as discursive players in the political arena, generating enunciative forms that, albeit lacking intentionality, acquire symbolic potency. The Zelensky deepfake and the Trump Gaza film should not be read as isolated events, but rather as

emblematic artefacts embedded within a broader communicative ecosystem shaped by platform governance, automation, and simulation. These items show how, in semiotic settings where human and non-human agents interact, rhetorical authority can be modeled, copied, and affirmed.

Enunciation theory developed by Greimas provides a basic interpretative framework for understanding these events. In both cases, the AI-generated outputs imitate stylistic familiarity, institutional stance, allowing them to occupy a zone of discursive legitimacy, and narrative coherence structures. As the Zelensky deepfake instance shows, credibility is more derived from structural plausible congruence with politically acceptable political registers than from factual correspondence (Greimas, 1983; Broden, 2014; Semykin, 2022). Comparably, the Trump film creates a discursive presence that looks politically significant despite the lack of propositional actuality by means of symbolic resonance and aesthetic saturation (Leone, 2023).

Floridi's concept of infra-agency serves to elucidate even more how non-human processes support the generation of political meaning. Unlike expressing intentional attitudes, artificial beings generate outputs that change informational environments and orient interpretative processes. These outputs reflect structural integration of the systems into infrastructure of visibility, repetition, and emotive resonance; they are not accidental (Floridi, 2014; Floridi, 2023). Though rejected, the deepfake started reactive discursive reactions and revealed the vulnerability of symbolic authority in settings under computational logics. Though its tone is more elusive, the Trump film shows how simulation may be a vehicle for ideological projection free of institutional authorship or reasoning dedication.

From a communication standpoint, these situations most fairly capture the dynamics of hybrid mediation as Peverini (2025) outlines. Meaning arises from the interaction of user involvement, interface aesthetics, and computer design; it does not start with a speaker.

Finally, academics including Gillespie (2024) and Klinger and Svensson (2018) offer critical analysis of the architectural and algorithmic conditions supporting various forms of symbolic efficacy. Platform logics choose resources that match stylistic consistency and emotional resonance, therefore facilitating the circulation and seeming reliability of AI-generated content. Their impacts are not neutral; these systems create regimes of visibility

that help to define political legitimacy and contribute to shape how assertions are acknowledged, spread, and naturalized as politically feasible speech.

The comparative study reveals a simple change in the architecture of discursive power instead of any technological advance. Not because they speak truth, but rather because they fit the symbolic language and infrastructure goals of modern political communication, artificial intelligence-generated texts become popular. These results imply the requirement of a theoretical model capable to explain the discursive character of generated statements in political life.

This kind of model has to semiotically explain how algorithmically credibility, visibility, and performative legitimacy are distributed. This need invites a more direct relationship with the research questions this thesis asks, which will now be discussed in view of the analytical insights acquired in this chapter.

3.5 Addressing the research question: towards a semiotic understanding of AI-driven veridiction

The work generated in this chapter lets one directly return to the central research question brought up at the end of Chapter 2: *How does generative artificial intelligence contribute to the production of political truth in contemporary discourse, and what are the epistemological and democratic consequences of its algorithmic participation in veridiction processes?* This paper aims to investigate not only the content of AI-generated political materials but also their structural capacity to replicate authority, shape public opinion, and act in discursive regimes via automated processes of communication. Analyzing two case studies, the Trump Gaza video and the Zelensky deepfake, showcases how the response to this dilemma resides in the ability of synthetic information to enact credible discourse via aesthetic, rhetorical, and infrastructure legitimacy rather than in its factual truth.

Inspired by Greimas's theory of enunciation, the study has shown that AI-generated material functions by faithfully duplicating the discursive markers of political discourse, thus

assuming the structural position of an enunciator. Zelensky's deepfake was not just a fabrication but also an impersonation of political performance employing artistic familiarity to generate a temporary appearance of institutional credibility (Broden, 2014; Semykin, 2022). Comparably, the Trump Gaza video developed an emotionally gripping story grounded not in propositional argument but in symbolic resonance and visual saturation (Leone, 2023). Both scenarios highlight how, in the absence of subjectivity or intention, generative artificial intelligence can produce utterances serving as political signals.

Floridi's concept of infra-agency clarifies even more how artificial systems contribute to the production of public meaning. These systems provide outputs that are structurally linked into settings regulated by repetition, visibility, and affect instead of acting with cognitive intent, thus reshaping the epistemic and emotional limits of discourse (Floridi, 2014; Floridi, 2023). This form of agency helps AI-generated writings to be interventions in discursive circulation rather than only affirmations of conviction. The investigated cases indicate how such texts can initiate discussion, alter perspective, and question conventional wisdom on the definition of truth in society.

In all the cases analyzed, convergence of computational processes, platform design, and cultural expectations generated meaning instead of a speaker's intention. This confirms that political veridiction in the era of generative artificial intelligence is no longer anchored in the speaker. Rather, it is distributed between multiple human and non-human actor. AI helps in this process not to persuade by reason but rather to duplicate coherence, replicate institutional registers, and set off recognition via rhetorical familiarity.

Gillespie's (2024) study of platform infrastructure supports the notion that design now determines credibility itself. Rather than being proven by argument, truth is enacted by circulation, stylistic appropriateness, and algorithmic elevation. Rather than just spreading discourse, algorithmic agency arranges exposure and resonance, as Klinger and Svensson (2018) argue. Under this communicative logic, artificial beings become politically active not out of intention but because of how they are received.

Including these theoretical frameworks into the discursive investigation of the two case studies has helped this chapter answer the research question. Generative artificial intelligence modifies the conditions under which assertions become believable, therefore

enabling political truth rather than merely articulating claims. Important consequences follow from this shift. Political legitimacy moves from being a matter of conscious consensus to a concern of rhetorical sensibility. Nowadays, trust relates more to the recognized normality of assertions within algorithmically structured systems than to speaker accountability. Veridiction becomes a performative process co-produced by human users and technological systems: technologies that replicate speech and allocate attention, and users who interpret, circulate, and legitimize these utterances within discursive ecosystems governed by algorithmic norms.

This rereading of truth as a semiotic and infrastructural phenomenon offers political theory and normative reflection new directions. The last chapter will consolidate these findings, discuss their consequences for democratic discussion and judicial institutions, and propose future paths of research to actively engage with the development of artificial veridiction.

Chapter 4: Reframing political truth: reflections, implications, and future directions

Approaching the last chapter of this thesis entails facing the more profound consequences of what has developed in the earlier chapters. The work done thus far indicates that political truth in the era of generative artificial intelligence cannot be understood as a stable, deliberate, or only human concept. Beginning in Chapter 1 as a semiotic study of rhetorical structures, what started in Chapter 2 as a critical investigation of algorithmic agency and automated discourse developed in Chapter 3 with the thorough study of two emblematic cases: the Trump Gaza video and the Zelensky deepfake. These examples were selected not for their shock value or technological innovation but rather because they highlight, in strikingly different ways, the ways in which synthetic material could replicate governmental power and change discursive legitimacy.

This last chapter moves from analytical presentation to introspection. It aims to synthesize the key conclusions and tackle the more general issues raised by artificial systems starting to contribute in the creation of political meaning. Though brief, the Zelensky example exposed how deepfakes may use visual and artistic familiarity to enter institutional conversation and create brief trust. More nuanced in its reception, the Trump Gaza video showed how artificial intelligence-generated media may blur the lines between parody, propaganda, and performance, therefore generating a politically powerful message functioning without obvious authorship or factual commitment.

These incidents considered together present basic difficulties. When a political statement comes from synthetic sources and its reality depends on form, repetition, and circulation, what makes it credible? In such surroundings, what happens to accountability, authorship, and democratic judgment? With a sequence of closing thoughts, Chapter 4 answers these questions. First, in view of the events under analysis, it questions the fundamental concept of political truth. It then looks at the political and normative consequences of synthetic speech as well as the challenges it presents for democratic institutions, public opinion, and regulation. It also freely acknowledges the limits of this

research, including the gaps in literature, the restrictions of technique, and the global extent of the case studies. At last, it lists numerous prospective directions and suggests how education, policy, and critical theory might start to react to the emergence of algorithmic veridiction.

This chapter proposes that we are only at the beginning of knowing how generative artificial intelligence will continue to shape political language, hence providing not final answers but rather indicates Not only improved instruments of analysis but also a greater community knowledge of how symbolic legitimacy is created, enacted, and progressively mediated by non-human systems today is needed.

4.1 Final reflections: reconsidering political truth in the age of generative AI

Looking back at the development of this thesis, one idea becomes particularly clear. Political truth can no longer be considered a stable or objective entity grounded in speaker intentionality. What emerges from the analysis is the increasing capacity of generative artificial intelligence not simply to imitate discourse, but to produce it in structurally convincing and rhetorically powerful ways. These systems do not passively support communication. They actively participate in shaping what is recognized as credible and meaningful in the public sphere.

This transformation has consequences that go beyond technology. It forces us to rethink the frameworks of responsibility and authorship, as well as the criteria that define legitimacy. The two case studies analyzed in this work demonstrate this dynamic. In both cases, the issue is not just about whether the content is false or true. The real impact lies in the way these artefacts circulate, the speed with which they generate attention, and the extent to which they resemble familiar discursive forms.

One of the aspects that had the strongest effect on me during the research process was realizing how easily these AI-generated texts gain visibility and relevance. Their success

often depends not on what they mean, but on how well they reproduce what we expect political speech to look and sound like.

Another element that emerged clearly is the fragility of traditional verification systems. Although we like to believe that journalistic mediation, institutional accountability, and critical thinking can counter disinformation, the cases studied suggest that affect and speed often overtake these safeguards. Even when quickly debunked, AI-generated content can leave behind doubt, confusion, or even legitimacy, simply by existing within an infrastructure that rewards resonance over accuracy.

This process also redefines our idea of political communication. If an utterance becomes credible simply because it matches formal expectations and circulates efficiently, then we are no longer dealing with content in the traditional sense. We are dealing with simulations that create meaning through performance rather than reference. The risk is not only that speech becomes artificial, but that our criteria for truth follow the same trajectory.

These reflections do not lead to pessimism. Rather, they highlight the need to think more carefully about how truth is now constructed, shared, and believed. Generative artificial intelligence is not simply a challenge to political communication. It is a mirror that reveals how much our democratic systems rely on symbolic conventions, and how easily those conventions can be reproduced by non-human agents.

4.2 Political and Normative Implications

By incorporating generative AI into political language, this thesis reveals a complex and developing communicative scenario that is reshaping the mechanisms of democratic discourse, truth generation, and public accountability frameworks. Systems that can generate statements that mimic authority, credibility, and coherence without human involvement are replacing the conventional speaker-intention-responsibility model, which this phenomenon ushers in.

This shift signifies a shift in the political climate regarding the criteria for genuine discourse. Assuming human intentionality, factual accountability, and ethical duty, the

communicative contract between speaker and listener has historically been the foundation of democratic communication. But this connection is broken by generative system outputs. Belief, awareness, or discussion are not required by these systems. Their work seeps into the symbolic fabric of democratic society through the employment of consumer-recognizable rhetorical and emotional registers. This symbolic effectiveness is not based on rational argumentation but on aesthetic harmony, interface dynamism, and algorithmic priority. Political utterances are therefore transformed from arguments to be examined into stimuli to be acknowledged and disseminated.

This change will have far-reaching consequences. When there is no clear object of speech, it is more difficult to punish those whose words influence public opinion. When synthetic discourse mimics the formal characteristics of institutional speech and makes its way into the media landscape, it becomes nearly impossible for the audience to distinguish between the two. When this happens, it's possible to reach a point of symbolic saturation, where believing anything is as easy as repeating a familiar phrase. There is no room for collaborative reasoning; instead, the logic of virality and resonance takes precedence, and instant gratification takes precedence over thought and subtlety.

The public sphere's epistemic framework isn't the only thing this phenomenon shakes up. New symbolic power inequalities are also created. Even without offering better arguments or deeper understanding, those with access to generative technology and knowledge of algorithmic visibility settings can dominate the attention market. Competence in infrastructure, not deliberative ability, is thus the determinant of political legitimacy. The capacity to emanate credibility and authority, rather than relying on persuasive arguments, is the foundation of power in this setting.

The situation is similarly worrisome from a normative perspective. Identifying individuals who can be held responsible for their speech actions is the foundation of regulatory regimes. Nevertheless, political texts produced by AI do not have a distinct author, origin, or purpose. This complicates the use of common categories such as responsibility, authorship, and culpability. Institutions need to quickly adjust to new discursive environments where systems aim to maximize participation, visibility, and replication, rather than people doing speech activities.

A broader ethical dilemma is brought up by this matter. Reacting by imposing restrictions on generative technology could undermine democratic innovation and free speech. Simultaneously, walking on eggshells means letting political discourse gradually give way to synthetic language dictated by platform infrastructure logic. For a more measured response, regulators should prioritize systemic openness rather than individual content monitoring. Regulators should not focus on controlling the results of generative systems, but rather on defining the algorithmic and architectural conditions that make something believable and easy to believe.

We need to reevaluate public literacy from the ground up in light of this crisis, which is beyond formal control. We need to equip citizens with new interpretive tools so they can make sense of a discursive environment where ideas, attitudes, and actions can be mobilized through speech that doesn't necessarily come from a person. The aesthetics of political discourse, the semiotics of artificial language, and the infrastructural dynamics of platforms should all be part of students' critical awareness-building curriculum. The general population has to pick up the habit of questioning not just the content of statements but also their source, intended audience, and practicability.

Finally, this thesis only touches on a small portion of the political and normative ramifications of AI-generated language. They are looking for new ways to judge credibility, accountability, and the truth, and they are challenging the very foundations of democratic outreach. Algorithmic veridiction's arrival is more of a paradigm change in how the public sphere is structured than a technical glitch. There are more than simply technological solutions to this change. Because of this, we need to reevaluate the institutional and symbolic frameworks that govern the production, dissemination, and critique of political meaning.

4.3 Theoretical and Methodological Limitations of the Research

It is critical to recognize the limitations of this thesis, despite its attempts to offer a fresh and theoretically sound analysis of the discursive power of generative AI in politics.

These reflect more than simply technological constraints, they also help to establish the conceptual space in which the research has to be placed and understood.

The first and most obvious limitation is the uneven distribution of disciplines and the disjointed nature of the existing literature. The thesis's three primary axes, political communication, artificial intelligence, and semiotics, have developed from separate schools of thought and seldom come together. The seminal works of Greimas, Eco, and Barthes offer complex methods for dissecting rhetorical coherence, symbolic authority, and enunciation. But these models can't manage the performative logics of algorithmic communication. While Floridi's and other recent AI studies lay a solid philosophical and ethical groundwork, they fail to tackle the symbolic and discursive mechanisms that give rise to the political meaning of AI-generated texts. Most of the work on hybrid mediation and algorithmic focuses on media aesthetics and brand marketing. Applying their conceptual categories to the realm of politics necessitates caution, as doing so could lead to distortion or ambiguity in meaning.

The nature of the original sources is another constraint. Media, editorial, and journalistic sources account for the vast bulk of generative AI discussion material. Stories from these sources often contradict one another, veering between dystopian fear and utopian elation. By painting AI as either a danger or an interesting phenomenon, this polarization runs the risk of obfuscating the complex semiotic and structural processes that support AI-mediated communication. Despite the study's best efforts, it takes place in a media landscape that fails to provide analytical objectivity and instead portrays AI in terms of moral dichotomies.

This research makes use of semiotic-discursive analysis as its methodological foundation for a qualitative and interpretative approach. A more sophisticated understanding of systems that make sense of the world is possible with this approach, but the results are not generalizable. The Trump Gaza video and the Zelensky deepfake are two distinct case studies that provide important context but do not represent the diversity of AI-produced political discourse. It is difficult to gauge the public's genuine impressions, interpretations, or emotional reactions to these artifacts due to a lack of empirical testing, reception studies, and ethnographic data. The provided content is more akin to an interpretative recreation of the symbolic mechanisms at work than a sociological analysis of audience responses.

Also, one must think about geopolitical limitations. Within Western-centric media systems, influenced by platform capitalism, liberal democratic traditions, and Anglo-American discursive grammar, both case studies are embedded. Throughout the thesis, the terms of credibility, enunciation, and veridiction are elaborated to represent these particular ideological and communicative contexts. How well the same analytical tools work with various political systems, media ecosystems, and cultural logics is an open subject. Assessing the global validity of the suggested idea would necessitate further thorough comparison inquiry.

Last but not least, the dynamic character of the technology phenomenon in question imposes limitations. There are communication implications of generative artificial intelligence due to its dynamic nature and the ever-changing ways it is used. While building a theoretical framework, this thesis records a certain point in time that may require reconfiguration in view of fresh findings. The items under investigation are representative rather than exhaustive, thus the results should be taken with a grain of salt. Artificial intelligence, AI, political speech will work in a changing semiotic and infrastructure environment.

These constraints do more to characterize the research's epistemological stance than to hinder it. Future research should integrate technical criticism, semiotic analysis with empirical data, and interdisciplinary dialogue, they stress. This thesis successfully explains how AI might impact political arguments using the concepts of hybrid mediation, algorithmic enunciator, infra-agency, and veridiction. Still, they are a foundational development in the quest for a fuller understanding of synthetic communication. Developing a critical vocabulary that can navigate the new realities of language, power, and legitimacy in the digital era requires bridging the gap between symbolic critique and computational systems.

4.4 Future Outlook and Research Directions

The thoughts in this thesis not only help to consolidate an interpretative framework but also enable the formation of specific hypotheses and methodological routes for next

studies. Growing integration of generative artificial intelligence into political communication processes demands a theoretical reaction that is both ambitious and flexible. This answer should interact with the semiotic, technological, and epistemological configurations defining how political meaning is generated today, not try to restore a lost communicative authenticity.

Generative artificial intelligence systems could acquire ever more autonomous roles in political debate in the next years. Though they might not be candidates or institutions, these systems could have discursive power and generate ideological alignment, therefore strengthening symbolic narratives, and building rhetorical legitimacy. Political utterances will have less and less symbolic power connected to institutional sources and more to their aesthetic consistency, affective resonance, and algorithmic visibility. Already seen in the case studies examined, this condition could become structurally normal.

This changing terrain calls for various paths of future research especially quite important. First, a semiotic framework meant for synthetic outputs must be developed, able to analyze the discursive impacts of texts created without aim or subjectivity. This model ought to be able to challenge the degrees of rhetorical coherence, symbolic plausibility, and performative authority defining political language produced by artificial intelligence. Theoretical categories provided by Greimas, Eco, or Barthes will have to be revised in view of hybrid mediation, algorithmic simulation, and platform logics.

Second, methodological innovation is crucial. Although this thesis took a qualitative, semiotic-discursive approach, next studies should integrate this with empirical tools such audience ethnographies, reception studies, and quantitative measurements. These instruments will help to record how consumers grasp, absorb, or reject synthetic content as well as how cultural filters assign or deny truth-value in diverse contexts.

Third, a more extensive interdisciplinary cooperation will be needed. Political theory, semiotics, media studies, computer science, and design ethics must come together to create a unified critical vocabulary for characterizing communication in systems where authorship is replaced and purpose is meaningless. These initiatives also have to cover visual culture, interface design, and platform studies to foresee how infrastructure may be reengineered to support discursive pluralism, uncertainty, and hesitancy.

Normatively speaking, democratic institutions will have to rethink the bases of political legitimacy and discursive responsibility. In a situation where statements are not purposefully misleading but nonetheless have discursive and affective impact, conventional regulatory frameworks that concentrated on misinformation or dishonesty might prove insufficient. The non-human, platform-mediated character of political communication will have to be included in new ideas for communicative legitimacy. Policies for symbolic transparency, responsibility structures for algorithmic systems, and infrastructure guidelines for platform governance could all fit here.

Within the field of education, the difficulty is equally systemic. Democratic involvement in the era of generative speech will call for a semiotic competency education. Citizens will have to be educated in the comprehension of symbolic cues, infrastructure signals, and aesthetic patterns as well as in media literacy. Not to identification of the speaker, but rather to respect of rhetorical form, trust will be more closely linked.

Looking ahead, one can also expect synthetic political agents able of performing credibility, enunciation, and ideological positioning across several platforms to develop. These agents form part of the symbolic framework of public discussion even though they function without institutional mandate and without epistemic dedication. Their legitimacy will result from their ability to occupy the discursive area set aside for political speech, not from truth claims.

This forecast points to a time when the performance of truth might take front stage over its deliberate creation. If so, academics will have to look at how infrastructure design shapes what may be spoken, believed, and acted upon. Studies might look at ways to include friction into communicative platforms, giving slowness, ambiguity, and symbolic opacity first priority over speed, coherence, and emotional clarity. Re-politicizing interpretation and restoring the discursive tension needed for democratic plurality should be the objectives instead of stifling synthetic speech.

Finally, this thesis does not just propose fresh subjects for next research. It invites a need to rethink political communication's very architectural design. Should generative artificial intelligence become a permanent part of public speech, the political sphere must be enlarged to incorporate artificial agents inside its symbolic economy without forsaking the

means required to challenge, dissect, and reinterpret the ideas they produce. One of the most pressing intellectual and civic problems of the digital age will be bridging the gap between symbolic criticism and computational logic.

Conclusion

This thesis examines the significant alteration of political discourse in the era of generative artificial intelligence, not to undermine technological advancement, but to reveal its semiotic implications and sociopolitical effects. Generative AI does not simply modify the velocity or efficacy of content dissemination. It alters the very structure of meaning. It recontextualizes the composition and dissemination of political messages, as well as their perception, legitimization, and contestation within the public sphere.

The central thesis articulated in this study posits that AI-generated artifacts, especially political deepfakes, transcend mere examples of digital fraud. Instead, they establish a novel discourse regime where the indicators of truth, authority, and presence are generated by machine simulation rather than experiential or institutional foundations. These artefacts represent an aesthetics of plausibility, a method of meaning creation where surface coherence, emotional impact, and computational optimization supplant epistemological foundation.

Characterizing this circumstance as a crisis would be overly simplistic. This research aims not to moralize or to reaffirm a nostalgic ideal of unmediated truth, but to critically examine the symbolic functions of generative AI in political communication. The issue is not in the nature of these technologies, but in their functions: how they operate, influence, and intervene within a wider context of signs, interpretations, and ideological dynamics.

In this context, the deepfake is not merely a manipulation tool, but a sophisticated semiotic instrument that engages in the redefinition of truth paradigms. It concurrently undermines conventional enunciative contracts while prompting novel methods of interpretation, resistance, and counter-narration. The issue at hand is not the vanishing of truth, but the advent of a post-veridiction state where the indicators of truth are disputed, redefined, and progressively co-created by artificial systems.

This thesis demonstrates that generative AI accelerates and complicates existing processes of mediatized politics, including the personalization of leadership, the affective framing of ideology, and the spectacle-driven character of political discourse. It also creates

a rupture and an ontological uncertainty by automating the act of enunciation itself. In these situations, the speaker ceases to be a subject with intents and accountability, instead becoming a system of probabilistic outputs designed to replicate rhetorical form. This transition raises concerns not just about the content of the discourse but also about the identity of the speaker and the extent to which that identity can be effectively situated within the frameworks of political accountability.

This theory refrains from characterizing AI as only a dystopian entity. It aims to express a sophisticated viewpoint that neither condemns technology with fear nor uncritically exalts it, but instead examines it critically. Generative AI is not intrinsically a harmful force in political communication. It is a potent, opaque, and ideologically influenced instrument that mirrors and distorts the cultural, economic, and symbolic frameworks within which it exists. The objective is to cultivate a critical literacy that allows us to interpret its mechanisms, foresee its consequences, and conceive more deliberate and responsible methods of utilizing it.

The optimism that supports this research is based on awareness. The aspiration is that future applications of generative AI in political discourse would be informed not merely by efficiency or spectacle, but by ethical consideration, interpretative precision, and a broadened comprehension of communication within a shared symbolic framework. This necessitates not only legislative supervision or technical protections but also a profound cultural transformation favoring interaction that prioritizes thinking over reaction, complexity over immediacy, and significance over imitation.

The work described above offers a limited perspective on a broad and dynamic domain. Subsequent research could broaden this focus by examining user reception, cross-cultural differences in AI political discourse, or the enduring effects of algorithmic narrative saturation. Collaborations across semiotics, computational linguistics, political philosophy, and media ethics will be crucial in addressing this domain.

In conclusion, generative AI transcends mere content generation. It creates novel conditions of discursivity. Engaging with these situations entails confronting the fundamental principles of how we signal, interpret, and produce the political. What occurs in the public realm when its expressions are no longer inherently human, when its pictures are produced

without an indexical source, and when its truths are constructed through mechanisms designed to imitate rather than convey meaning? This thesis aims to initiate that inquiry, not to conclude it.

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