

Review Article

Management of Political Skids in the Age of the Internet and Cybernetics: A Critical Analysis of a Conceptual Migration

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Abstract: The aim of this study is to examine the transposition of scientific and technical concepts into the political sphere, particularly with regards to the management of political skids and missteps in the digital age. The Internet and cybernetics era have profoundly transformed political affairs; this network of barely fifty years old continues to challenge established powers. Even more remarkably, the pioneers of the Internet probably didn't realize it in their laboratories: Internet has succeeded in disrupting the established order. This study will examine the dominant representations of political crises in their expressions and manifestations within cyberspace. At a time when public spaces are being redefined by digital mediation, it is essential to critically analyze the emergence of the new forms of discourse and communication that disrupt and overturn certain socio-political inertias.

Keywords: Cybernetics, Digital Humanities, Internet, Policy/Politics, Skid.

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INTRODUCTION

Firstly understood by André Marie Ampère as “the science of the government of men” (1834), the concept of “cybernetics” was promoted in 1947 by the American mathematician Norbert Wiener in *Cybernetics, or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine* [1]. Norbert Wiener wanted to point out, through this concept, “the science of mastered analogies between organisms and machines” [2]. Being not only from computer science area, cybernetics can also be extended to many other fields of human life. At its origin, it was deeply an interdisciplinary domain: it was referring at the same time to cognitive sciences, artificial intelligence, economic modelling, constructive epistemology, computing, robotics, etc. It is therefore easy to understand why cybernetics is a science at the crossroads of technology, biology and social sciences, and why it shapes our understanding of complex systems and transforms our world at a dizzying speed. Nowadays, cybernetics can be mostly understood as the science

constituted of the set of theories on the processes of command and communication and their regulation with living beings, within machines and within sociological, political and economic systems. It is this aspect of cybernetics that makes it be also considered as the science of systems. However, contemporary politics and policies of countries around the world are deeply linked to cybernetics. Cybernetics, this scientific trend, represents a remarkable example of conceptual migration: concepts which have been established in political fields in scientific have been transposed to technic fields, those of telecommunication and informatics, and reversely. For Mathieu Tricot, for instance, such kind of transposition from science to politics is relatively frequent, and one of the specificities of cybernetics is that this translation was carried out largely internally, from the role played by cybernetics movement themselves, starting with its founder Norbert Wiener, who used it as a weapon, in the debates and struggles of the time, the concepts forged in the technical environment [3].

¹ Cf. Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics. Or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*, Paris and Cambridge, Hermann & Cie, The MIT Press, 1948.

² Cf. *idem*.

³ Mathieu Tricot, « Les implications politiques de la cybernétique américaine », *Araben, Les cahiers du*

GREPH, Groupe de Recherche en Épistémologie Politique et Historique, 2006, Les réceptions de la science, pp. 54-63. <<http://greph.sciencespo-lyon.fr/index.php?page=Araben-les-cahiers-du-GREPH>>, p. 1.

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The purpose of this reflection is to study the transposition of scientific and technic concepts in political domains insofar as the management of political skids in cyberspace is notably concerned. The Internet era has deeply affected political affairs; this network of barely 50 years old is continuing to shake power and is shaking up the planet and overwhelmed political leaders. Better still, even the pioneers of the Internet did not probably suspect it, in their laboratories: Internet has succeeded in thwarting the established order. Cybernetics, through the Internet, offers new modalities to political relationships. Numeric social media for instance are too ambivalent: they participate to a political culture of domination as of emancipation; they act on the wills of actors and carry liberating and restrictive prescriptions [4]. If they are at the same time a source of sufferings and of emancipation, how can one evaluate their political potentiality? If the political implications of Internet and relative tools offer new perspectives for political affairs, they carry many interrogations. How and why has cybernetics done of information a political concept? In what extend can management of political skids in the Internet and cybernetics era be legitimated and be efficient? Better still, how can politicians, whose nature is to accompany social mutations, transform themselves if political practices are taking digital forms? How can we evaluate the political impact of the Internet? Finally, what can intellectuals really do to overcome political skids in general and in cybernetic context in particular?

The aim of this work is to question the dominant representations of political crises in their cybernetic dimension. In the era when public spaces are redefined by numeric and digital mediations, we want to critically analyze the emergence of new forms of discourse and communication which disrupt and knock over some sociopolitical inertias.

1. Cybernetics and Internet: From Computing to Politics

1.1. Treatment, Processing and Control of Information in the Digital and Cybernetic Age

Plato was using the word “*kubernêtikê*” to refer to the piloting of a ship. The terms like “steering”, “rudder”, “government” or “governor” are referring to that idea of “guiding”, “orientation”, “controlling”, etc. Cybernetics, insofar as the treatment of information is concerned, deals with the notions of feedback,

information and control, through systems (may they be “men”, “machines”, or societal systems) [5]. Before being theorized, the principles of what cybernetics will become were already put into practice in engineering, and later in computer sciences. André-Marie Ampère was for example talking of cybernetics as the art of governing men [6]. It is this political usage of cybernetics that will be found in the works of Norbert Wiener, the founding father of cybernetics [7]. In 1950 *The Human Use of Human Being. Cybernetic and Society*, Wiener has affirmed:

“Until recently, there was no existing word for this complex of ideas, and in order to embrace the whole field by a single term, I felt constrained to invent one. Hence ‘Cybernetics,’ which I derived from the Greek word kubernetes, or ‘steersman,’ the same Greek word from which we eventually derive our word ‘governor.’ Incidentally, I found later that the word had already been used by Ampere with reference to political science, and had been introduced in another context by a Polish scientist, both uses dating from the earlier part of the nineteenth century.” [8].

However, the treatment of information that cybernetics deals with is a transdisciplinary one. The thermodynamics generally cited by Nobert Wiener has prepared the coming out of cybernetics. Physiology has also brought many elements and principles such as homeostasis (the equilibrium of the blood system transposed on social and human affairs) [9]. Structuralism, as a trend that valorizes relations, has tried to overcome the atomist thought in sciences, and that will play an important role in the progress of schematization or the reduction of the diversity in the world to the combinatory of simple elements, more easily to understand by computing systems. Cybernetics can then be apprehended as a continuation of phenomenology, in this sense that it is used to analyze phenomena in view of understand the autonomy and the particularity, by the form, of a reality, in order to provide a modelling and/or a mechanization of that reality. In fact, the first cybernetic movement developed around Macy’s conferences between 1942 and 1953 has regrouped mathematicians, logicians, cognitivists, anthropologists, neurophysiologists, psychologists and economists who had the objective of building a general science of the functioning of the spirit or the mind. Historically and

⁴ Cf. Maurice Simo Djom (*dir.*), *Les réseaux sociaux. Ce qu’ils ont fait de nous et ce que nous devons en faire*, Yaoundé, Afrédit, 2020.

⁵ Cf. Slava Gerowitch, *From Newspeak to Cyberspeak. A History of Soviet Cybernetics*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, The MIT Press, 2002.

⁶ Cf. André-Marie Ampère, *Essai sur la philosophie des sciences ou Exposition analytique d’une classification naturelle de toutes les connaissances humaines*, Paris, Chez Bachelier Imprimeur Libraire, 1834.

⁷ *Infra.*

⁸ Norbert Wiener, *The Human Use of Human Being. Cybernetic and Society* (1950), with a new Introduction by Steve J. Heims, London, Free Association Books, 1989, p. 15

⁹ Cf. William Ross Ashby, *Design for a Brain. The Origin of Adaptive Behaviour* (1952), New York and London, John Wiley & Sons and Chapman & Hall, 1960; *An Introduction to Cybernetics*, London, Sons and Chapman & Hall, 1956.

epistemologically speaking, cybernetics occupies and unstable place: on one side the application of hard sciences (mathematics and physics notably), on the other side of the study of living beings, and on another side the study of a cognition founded on the metaphor of the computing system. However, cybernetics is more a domain which deals fundamentally with the paradigm of the treatment of information. This was bringing together specialists of different domains, focusing on their common interest for the mechanisms of *circular causality*, notably with the concept of *feedback*. Information, basically taken as items on something or somebody, is one of the realities which are deeply linked to this issue of circular causality. Information which is given is supposed to have a particular kind of feedback.

In 1943 precisely, two essential articles are published, "Behavior, Purpose and Teleology" [10], in which Arturo Rosenblueth, Norbert Wiener and Julian Bigelow have studied models of organization underlying finalized behaviours, and "A Logical Calculus of Ideas Immanent in Nervous Activity" [11], in which Warren McCulloch and Walter Pitts have analysed models of organization underlying perception. Norbert Wiener, in particular, defines cybernetics, in his book entitled *Cybernetics, or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*, as a science which studies exclusively communications and their regulations in natural and artificial systems [12]. Thus, behind the concept of *cybernetics*, there is a will "to describe and explain choice within social constraints: how individual actors achieve their goals in social settings where their decisions are influenced by norms and values and also constrained by the wider environment" [13]. Wiener is one of the most important thinkers to have popularized the social implications of cybernetics, this through the analogy he has established between automatic systems and human institutions.

1.2. Cybernetics and Internet Features and their Political Implications

Apprehended as systematized whole, we can see that cybernetics does not deal only with logical, mathematical or computing elements, it is also deeply linked to political issues. Contemporary usages of

cybernetics in relationship to politics and policies reveals many things. It is what can be brought out through the essential features and characteristics of cybernetics. Every time, an idea in relationship to politics and policies can be established.

One of the fundamental features of cybernetics is the idea of *autoregulation*. The assimilation of cybernetic theories to systemic has permitted to come out with mechanisms of autoregulation of systems as processes of negative feedback taking aim at preventing a deviation. Cybernetics systems are taking aim at keeping a stable viable status of interaction within changing environments through a stochastic process of trials and errors.

Another feature is *interconnectibility*. Through the influence of structuralism, cybernetics sustains the possibility to establish many forms of connections between elements. The type of connections can predict the status of a system. It is the idea of a network of relationships which prevails in Internet or Web 2.0 era that appears here [14].

Furthermore, cybernetics is about *sharing of information and data*. According to Norbert Wiener, cybernetics deals exclusively with the sharing of information. In its application, cybernetics can then mean the means of organizing exchanges to make them become more efficient and to control them. As we have seen, cybernetics is then to be considered as a *science of information*; to be distinguished from journalism (science of information and communication) and computer science (science of rational and automatic treatment information using a computer). Cybernetics uses elements of both journalism and computer sciences. What makes the particularity of cybernetics is, first of all, the knowledge of the information. For Norbert Wiener, "Indeed, it is possible to treat sets of messages as having entropy like sets of states of the external world. Just as entropy is a measure of disorganization, the information carried by a set of messages is a measure of organization" [15]. In this affirmation, we can see that cybernetics is a phenomenological approach which studies information, its structure and its function in systemic interactions.

¹⁰ Norbert Wiener, Arturo Rosenblueth and Julian Bigelow, "Behavior, Purpose and Teleology", *Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 10, Issue, January 1943, pp. 18-24.

¹¹ Warren McCulloch and Walter Pitts, « A logical calculus of the ideas immanent in nervous activity », *Bulletin of Mathematical Biophysics*, University of Chicago Press, 1943.

¹² Cf. Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics. Or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*, op. cit.

¹³ Robert E. Goodin, Philip Pettit and Pogge Thomas (eds.), *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy*, Coll. "Blackwell Companions to

Philosophy", Clarlton, Blackwell Publishing, Vol. I and II, 2007, pp. 89-90.

¹⁴ The term Web 2.0 introduced by Tim O'Reilly in 2004 refers to the emergence of new numeric facilities which are indissociable from the evolution of Internet. Cf. Bader Ben Mansour, « Le rôle des médias sociaux en politique : Une revue de la littérature », in *Regards politiques*, vol. 1, n° 1, 2017, p. 4.

¹⁵ Norbert Wiener, *The Human Use of Humain Being. Cybernetic and Society* (1950), op. cit., p. 21. One can also see Claude Elwood Shannon, "A Mathematical Theory of Communication", in *The Bell System Technical Journal*, Vol. 27, N° 3, July 1948, pp. 379-423.

Cybernetics can be seen at this level as the general science of regulation and of communications in systems, may they be natural or artificial, or political systems in the case of this work. Cybernetics, according to Wiener is a mean that can be used to explain and understand all kinds of mechanisms with some simple logical formulations. We have the transmitter and the receiver; we do not care about their modes of functioning but about what he/she transmits or receives. The transmitter acts on the environment; he/she sends information; while the receiver ingrates the information from the environment. The flux of information is what is transmitted. The feedback or retroaction is the information which returns. It is this schema that can also be found on Internet insofar as information about political issues is concerned. There are loops of retroaction or circular mechanisms, or simply systems that can appear. The complexity of those networks can be modelled. When many systems are merged, their varieties are not added up but multiplied. The control of a system will consist in associating another system whose role will be to maintain weak as possible, the variety of results or goals. For example, the system to be studied can be unemployment, the system of control will be the unemployed person. The goal is to maintain an almost constant gap between unemployment and the jobless person.

The well-known characteristics of cybernetics is its assimilation to its *technical application*. The word cybernetics is sometimes apprehended as a method which passes by the science in itself and linked to the usage which is done of it. Cybernetics is then considered here as the expression of a mean of control.

All those features, linked to social sciences, have political implications. Cybernetics has permitted to show that any organism is constituted of a set of organs having particular functions which can be translated following some rules of combination or disjunction. One of the most popular cybernetic analogies between natural organisms and machines is that of John von Neumann through his analogy between computer and human brain [16]. An organization is generally described in terms of structure and functions but rarely in terms of correspondence. This last aspect is from the domain of cybernetics. Cybernetics studies organizations in terms of *correspondence*, of *adaptation* and of *appropriateness* to the conditions of the context and the environment. It is no more about to know “why something happens” but to know “which constraints have done something to happen”. Today, cybernetics is more defined as the

science constituted by the set of theories on the process of commanding and of communication, and of their regulation with the living being, within machines and in sociological, economic and political systems. It has as main aim the study of the interactions between governing systems (systems of control) and governed systems (operational systems) managed by retroaction or feedback principles.

Foreseen, to be controlled, cyberspace is nowadays losing this aim. The problem is becoming worse when dealing to politics and policies.

2. Political Issues and Skids in Internet and Cybernetics Era

2.1. Internet/Cybernetics and New Forms of Public Spaces

The coming of new technologies of information and communication and the democratization of Internet in daily life have restructured societies. The relationships have been reconfigured by the emergence of new forms of interpersonal and communal communications. These forms of communication are assisted by computers. The difference which is raised is at the level of the number of the communicators, the nature and the types of information, the interpretations given to that information. These new forms of communication mix up the boundaries of the public communicational space. They modify temporalities and open the way to question the modes of political and citizen’s participation. Exchanges are done beside those of the real like and real world. Anne Dalsuet is explicit on that issue when she writes [17]:

“[...] Digital space is not made up of embodied places we usually experience during our interviews. We meet through interposed screens on a page of variable size and definition, we focus our gaze on a two-dimensional wall and are absorbed by a space without physical depth. Restaurants, cafes, cinemas, shops, streets, gardens... these places with physical inscription have been doubled as digital non-places where we connect through interposed computer networks” [18].

In such a context, it is important to question the existence of this new form of numeric public space. This alteration affects many aspects of politics insofar as the public space of communication is concerned. It affects the strategies of communication [19]. Political organizations are obliged to use new tools such as numeric political propaganda and campaigns. We are in

¹⁶ Cf. John von Neumann, *L'ordinateur et le cerveau* suivi de *Les machines molles de Von Neumann*, par Dominique Pignon, trad. Pascal Engel, France, Flammarion, 1996.

¹⁷ We are the author of the translations (from French language to English language) of some quotations in this reflexion.

¹⁸ Anne Dalsuet, *T'es sur Facebook ? Qu'est-ce que les réseaux sociaux changes à l'amitié ?*, Paris, Flammarion, Coll. « Antidote », 2013, p. 12.

¹⁹ *Infra*.

the era of short declarations (tweets, retweets, comments, shares, likes, hashtags, etc.). The private lives of politicians are exposed in public space; there is no more private life.

In fact, the distinction between civil/private space and public space can be linked by what Habermas has called the “public space”. This space can be defined as a set of private persons put together in order to discuss on questions of common interest. It presupposes the existence of a rationality that underlays discussions. This space is submerged by the permanent recourse to new technologies of information and communication. It is right that discussions and political debates need the intermediation of means and supports of communication. The *digitalization/digitization* of the public space is proceeding through a change of the communicational supports. The situation is global. It affects all the parts of the earth. To Fatimata Diallo for example

“The African public space is not an exception to this phenomenon of invasion of information and communication technologies. This stems from the fact that there are, in Africa generally, opportunities for their use in order to involve actors in the consolidation of a critical public opinion which is highly essential to democratic life” [20].

The new form of space that emerges is a virtual space, a virtual world. One generally talks of the *cyberspace*. What characterizes this space is the deterritorialization of the public space. National spaces do not have boundaries. There is a break of national boundaries. Political communities do not identify any more themselves within a same nation, a same country or a same region. Everybody can give his/her opinion on any question or issue about the politics of any country, and consequently influence the politics of this country. The voice of the *world-citizen* can then, rightly or wrongly, influence the political destiny of a particular country.

Thanks to the Internet, the virtual space, the cyberspace, became a place of socialization from which citizens-users can directly act on their milieu by the mean of social networking, may it be formal or informal. This can be done by reading, debating, following or liking a post, proposing or making a choice on line, revolting, manifesting, criticizing, etc. Consequently, the Internet surfer can feel as being directly participating to choices, something which is not really possible physically speaking. It is a new form of citizenship that emerges on Internet platforms (Blogs and Websites) and social

medias. We are having today what is called “numeric public spaces” which new forms of standardized numerical platforms of institutions or organisms. This is having consequences in real life because the feeling of immediately, the absence of mediation between the citizen and the decision-maker persists out of the Net. This relation that comes out in the virtual milieu leads to some exigencies to real life. As we can see, the new forms of space whose emergence has been favoured by the development of cybernetics ineluctably leads to the readjustment of political affairs. New forms of communication jointly appear.

2.2. New Models of Political Communication

The actors of the cyberspace and real life are all put in a situation of communication. The main problem is about the new characteristics of these actors and the new forms of communication situations that are established. The “Who talks to who?” changes. At the same time, the modes of communication change.

Who are really the users of the cyberspace in the political context? The cyberspace is generally presented as that of young people. But this is not really true, even if they are the more represented online. All the generations are affected. However, there is something that can be established, with the development of numeric and digital facilities, young people have become politically more committed more than before. Their views affect decisions in all the social classes. Internet users (young or old generations) are seduced by communal Web Sites. Conjointly, political communication finds new expansion and growth. As Léon Walry has written.

“Political communication is also experiencing a new boom thanks to Internet and its features on all continents, including by many African heads of State whose champions in this area are Goodluck Jonathan (Nigeria), Jacob Zuma (South Africa), Paul Kagamé (Rwanda), or Alassane Dramane Ouattara (Ivory Coast). They use the various possibilities offered actually by the web: Website (institutional or personal), presence on social networks, writing of a blog, exchanges on discussion forums, publication of newsletters, applications on smartphones [...]” [21].

Social medias for instance have offered new facilities of interaction to political actors and institutions and to populations. They are becoming day by day popular near politicians and their organizations as the means of diffusion of political messages, of discovering

²⁰ Fatimata Diallo, « Espace public et technologies numériques en Afrique : Émergence, dynamique et gouvernance du cyberspace sénégalais », African Studies Centre, Leiden, The Netherlands, ASC Working Paper 86 (<https://www.ascleiden.nl/Pdf/wp86.pdf>), 2009, p. 2.

²¹ Léon Walry, « Le Web social : Quels impacts sur la citoyenneté, la démocratie et le monde politique ? », Projet de rapport, Assemblée parlementaire de la francophonie, Commission politique, Ottawa (Canada), 6 juillet 2014, p. 6.

networks of militants, etc. These activities are developed through the Web Sites of social medias. Politicians and political institutions are creating accounts in popular sites such as Facebook, Twitter (X), MySpace, LinkedIn, hi5, LinkedIn and Flickr [22]. The contents which are posted are linked to the ideologies of the given political organization. This is the case for example in Cameroon with the operation “11 millions of subscribed” for elections which was, in its beginning, more developed on social medias, before affecting people in real life. The cyberspace is politically active. There is what Philippe Breton calls “technicalization of speech” (« technicisation de la parole ») [23]. Facebook for example is a technology and an apprehension of the social [24]. It offers to everybody a digital tool which permits him/her to build his/her own social network: what is important is not *what* you know but *who* you know. Social medias have not really replaced already existing ones following a logic of substitution, and they have not only been added to them through a simple juxtaposition. What makes humanity today seems to be the capacity to be connected on Internet: “*Navigo ergo sum !*” [25]. On the 20th May 2012, Mark Zuckerberg, the founder of Facebook affirmed: “There are over two billion Internet users in the world, and our goal is to connect them all” [26]. In this context, politically speaking, one is in front of the raise of a certain form of cosmopolitanism which brings with all its consequences. The passage from the digital to the politic is very obvious:

“Digital social networks, aspiring to permeable contacts, all-out communications, the free flow of information and opinions, dialogue, transparency, the pooling of knowledge, and even responsibility in exchange, [...] thus promote a more open world where trust in collective action would be strengthened. This ambition defines not only an ethical horizon, it expresses determined political choices and seems to favor the revival of democratic life. However, the diversity of digital practices makes any idea of a single model illusory. If online networks advocate the social value of friendship, do they not also encourage the control of their users? Doesn’t the American electronic surveillance program, PRISM, indeed foresee the targeting of every American in the name of Barack Obama’s fight against terrorism?” [27].

²² On the social medias, cf. Anne Dalsuet, *T’es sur Facebook ? Qu’est-ce que les réseaux sociaux changes à l’amitié ?*, op. cit.

²³ Philippe Breton, *La parole manipulée*, Paris, Coll. « La Découverte », 2000, p. 58.

²⁴ Cf. Anne Dalsuet, *T’es sur Facebook ? Qu’est-ce que les réseaux sociaux changes à l’amitié ?*, op. cit., p. 7.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

What also characterizes cybernetic political communications is the anonymity of some Internet users that express themselves. This anonymity can sometimes be accompanied by some deviations in the liberty of expression. We are in front of a world where everything is permitted. Léon Walry can rightly affirm on that issue what follows:

“These recent months, social media has repeatedly resonated with current political events. For example, the Arab Spring, which saw a wave of protest grow to the point of overthrowing regimes that had been in power for decades, was marked by the use of social media. The same was true in ‘Occupy’ style mobilizations, where protesters coordinated their actions in this manner. There is no doubt that the true impact of social media on these mobilization movements remains to be rigorously studied.” [28].

Everything is happening in a spirit marked by an atypical and very profound revolution, with the democratization of individualism and the socialization of a form of permissiveness made up of the privatization of daily and public life. We are then at the heart of a moral and ideological void, and of a notorious deconstruction of political utopias, major characteristics of what Gilles Lipovetsky calls “the era of emptiness” [29]. All this is sustained by the multiplication of the modalities of communication: audio, textual, video, direct, rebroadcast, interactive, multilocation, etc. means.

2.3. The Forms of Political Skids in the Internet and Cybernetics Frames

At the highest level of the skids of cybernetics in the political context, we have cyber criminality.

“The transition, from information society to the digital society, is marked by the uninterrupted growth of computational intelligence or numerical reason, which is visible in specific traits affecting meaningful strata of individual and collective lives. The proliferation of digital technologies and its impact on our judgment skills and decision induced behaviours reflecting the full powers conferred on the technical object and the dispossession of man of his humanity. Among the consequences of this technological power and marginalization / de-subjectivation of man is high on cybercrime which hardly protects African countries in their drive towards development.” [30].

²⁶ Marc Zuckerberg quoted in *id.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

²⁸ Philippe Breton, *La parole manipulée*, op. cit., p. 4.

²⁹ Cf. Gilles Lipovetsky, *L’ère du vide. Essai sur l’individualisme contemporain*, Coll. « Essais », Paris, Gallimard, 1983.

³⁰ Tiéba Karamoko, « La société digitale et les racines de la cybercriminalité », in *Perspectives philosophiques*.

One understands by cyber criminality as the set of offences and criminal acts committed through informatics networks. These crimes are from two kinds: first of all they can acquire the form of attacks directed to the informatics itself (virus, piracy and caused bugs for instance); secondly, they can be directed to individual people or groups (as illustration we can have the piracy of numeric accounts, the vulgarization of confidential private information, etc.). Politically, socially and economically cyber criminality is deeply affecting people and informatics systems (through them, people used to lose enough, machines are destroyed, systems of security are broken down, etc.). To the concept of cyber criminality, it is the concept of *hacker* which is generally attached. The hacker is the informatics pirate who acts by playing, the desire of challenging and without necessarily the intention of harming. However, more and more they are used for negative intentions. In the era of the “*terra numerica*” [31], the term “hacker” in fashion [32]. Besides cyber criminality, one can have fake news.

Fake news, as their name states it, are false information which are given with bad or non-affirmed intentions. They are sometimes given in order to manipulate the common views on a particular issue (creating fear, bringing people to revolts and misleading people for example). Fake news are very dangerous in sensible political context. Fake news can have disastrous impacts. Especially when we know that the logic of the social networks demands that the community increases, and this visibly. For instance, at your inscription, you just need to introduce your e-mail address and you are already informed of which of your contacts are already members of the same network.

As we can see, consequently, one can assist for example to *manipulations* and *riggings*. In a storming and surging political context. For instance, different political actors sometimes give themselves to some malpractices: we generally have weak and strong political forces: the governing class, the opposition class, the citizens and the foreigners. The weaknesses and strengths of the governing political class and other political classes are exposed for affirmed or non-affirmed reasons. Everything goes to any and all directions. The governing class wants to impose certain views which are in accordance with its interest, using the idea of a *pretended*, and really always *justified*, defense of national and patriotic values and interests. At the same

time, the opposition, the political class which seeks at all costs to expose the breaches and the deficiencies of the governing power, uses the new technologies of information and communication in order to massively and in an accelerated manner spread its ideas. At another side, the citizens, henceforth transformed to *patriots-Internet surfers*, are taken like a puppet, stooge or toys. There is a growing of what we can call the phenomenon on *e-citizenship*. Digital platforms are becoming for them appropriate frames of the expression of all their muzzled freedoms and liberties, the anonymity facilitating generally this psychological process. The governing class is then obliged to refer itself to what is said on Internet before taking, readjusting or imposing a decision. Laure Belot is explicit on that issue:

“The fact is that society is moving fast... much faster than some literally overwhelmed elites. [...] Increasingly, citizens, computers, telephones and smartphones in hand, are testing, imagining, circumventing laws, often without seeking illegality or even being aware of it, to communicate, buy, express themselves, learn differently” [33].

The issue of manipulating each other is attached to any Internet user. This causes the problem of sincerity of the general opinions and that of the oppositions and of the governing classes. “Citizens use social media to communicate with the public, to influence decision-makers and to hold parliaments and governments to account.” [34]. Digital revolution is more important than that of writing: online social networks, by modifying the space of communication, has favored interactivity. One can act on information that one receives can transform it, and does not rest only a passive receiver. In brief, “social networks are the site of new political operations and dysfunctions” [35].

Furthermore, cybernetic platforms are places of the spreading of discourses that can lead to debates, hatred and violence such as liberalism, fundamentalisms, multiculturalism, environmentalism, sovereignty, totalitarianism, human rights, racism, rebellion, tribalism, cosmopolitanism, feminism, terrorism, alter globalism, and secessionism [36]. Of course, cybernetics analyzed in reference to politics is offering new spaces and a new form of the expression of discourses nictitating to violence. The majority of contemporary political issues are flourishing through cybernetic skids notably. One is used to hear about cybernetic violence,

Revue Ivoirienne de Philosophie et Sciences Humaines, n° 009, 1^{er} semestre 20015, pp. 1-2.

³¹ Laure Belot, *La déconnexion des élites. Comment internet dérange l'ordre établi*, Paris, Les Arènes, 2015, p. 12.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 238.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

³⁴ Amanda Clarke, « Les médias sociaux : Utilisations politiques et conséquences pour la démocratie

représentative », in *Études générales*, Ottawa (Canada), Bibliothèque du Parlement, Publication n° 2010-10-F, p. 2.

³⁵ Anne Dalsuet, *T'es sur Facebook ? Qu'est-ce que les réseaux sociaux changes à l'amitié ?*, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

³⁶ For a wider list, cf. Robert E. Goodin, Philip Pettit and Pogge Thomas (eds.), *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy*, *op. cit.*

cybernetic terrorism, cybernetic strikes, cybernetic petitions, etc. They are taking, more and more, the form of classical political violence [37].

There is at the same time an implicit idea of the control of human beings in the sense of manipulation, and sometimes that of the use by the State for the manipulation of the masses. Social medias for example offer to their users many possibilities to have vast listeners and followers of their critics about political personalities or authorities and institutions. Given the multiplicity of Web sites of social medias, it becomes difficult to find the real source or the origin of an attack to the reputation or the integrity of those personalities of those institutions. It is how political personalities can find their speeches deformed in a detrimental manner. One knows how the different coming out of WikiLeaks, with its affairs, has affected contemporary political spheres. And it is not easy to legally pursue somebody who has done defamatory allegations online, because many users of social medias do not give their real identity. The manipulations are not only done on persons, they can also be applied on data.

Many political actors fear manipulations by lobbies of data online, manipulations that can influence the masses. They can be pressure from lobbying.

Finally, one has the notice that cybernetic skids are too various. The main question that remains is, however, this one: What can then be done to efficiently and rationally control this new reality which is adapting its concepts and elements to political issues by endangering them?

3. The Need of the Rationalization of the Relationship between Politics, Policies and Cybernetics

3.1. The Role of Intellectuals in the Elaboration of New Models on Political Practices

The role of the intellectuals is deeply linked to the elaboration of new models which should be learned, used and applied by people. They have to make sure to be obvious and neutral and possible in their theorizations. But the question is now this one: Which kind of numeric practice do we really want and for which kind of politics?

In fact, « le numérique renouvelle, de fait, des problématiques anciennes » [38]. In other words,

³⁷ Cf. Bernard-Henry Lévy, *La Barbarie à visage humain*, Paris, Éditions Grasset & Fasquelle, 1977.

³⁸ Mathieu Triclot, « Les implications politiques de la cybernétique américaine », *op. cit.*, p. 10.

³⁹ Laure Belot, *La déconnexion des élites. Comment internet dérange l'ordre établi*, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

⁴⁰ Mathieu Triclot, « Les implications politiques de la cybernétique américaine », *op. cit.*, p. 10.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

cybernetics raised new problems that can be traced in earlier periods. The modelling has to lay on the ethical principles of justice, equity and integrity.

Morally speaking, one can agree with Laure Belot, for whom these web giants are, by definition, not democracies. But they need the support of the masses to exist and grow economically [39]. Intellectual will have then an axiological role to play. As Mathieu Triclot is trying to notice it:

“From the point of view of the relationship between science, technology and society, it seems to me that we can learn three lessons from this cybernetic journey. First of all, we must learn to read history from the side of the losers. Cybernetics is indeed all too often considered as the representative par excellence of a dehumanized technoscience, which would inevitably dominate the contemporary world, replacing human values with those of the machine, communication with information... Instead of reading history as a destiny, even if it were to be realized through technology, it is better to do justice to the decisions and commitments of the actors of the time” [40].

The principle put into place, all the other aspects can be settled down, cybernetics to be taken as a multidisciplinary domain. “We see that the border between science and its reception in the political field is, within cybernetics, particularly mobile.” [41]. Truth should be at the center of that act of modelling to be done by intellectuals [42]. It will consist of the valorization of the moral side of truth and will go against scientific or organized fraud on cybernetic platforms.

The modelling project concerns also the content of things to be learned by political actors (citizens and governing classes).

3.2. Politics and Policies: At the School of New Technologies of Information and Communication

Politicians, because of their non-adaptation, have to go to the school of the New Technologies of Information and communication. Generally, we notice the ignorance of politicians on those new forms of expression based on the numeric [43]. This training has to be systematic, strategic, continuous and permanent. “No life is spared by the digital storm: ours, those of our

⁴² Cf. Jacques Chatué, *L'éthique de la recherche en 7 points. Approche déontologique et contextuelle*, Yaoundé, PUY, 2018, p. 25 *et sq.*

⁴³ « La vérité est que la société est dans une dynamique foudroyante, elle avance très vite, plus vite que certaines élites, notamment celles vieillissantes, qui sont complètement débordées. » André Liboire Tsala Mbani, *Regard critique sur le fantasme contemporain de la « société de communication »*. *L'idéologie de la cybernétique*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2016, p. 161.

children and grandchildren. So today we think, rightly or wrongly, that digital incompetence corresponds to illiteracy.” [44].

The systematic character of the training we are proposing is linked to the necessary content to be acquired by political actors. They would not need to be specialists of the computer science or to be engineers in the domain. They only have to master the fundamentals such as how basic things functions.

The strategic aspect of what we are proposing is linked to the orientations to give to the content in relationship to the reality of the field. Nowadays, computer science and engineering are not only dealing with hard sciences and with technologies, they are also deeply referring to social sciences such as sociology (sociology of organisms and systems), economy (the market economy which is more and more digitalized) [45], anthropology (computing is as a set of mirrors of diverse cultures), psychology (computing has opened the path to particular expressions of behaviours which are no more traditional and classical ones), law (for the jurisdiction of many legal issues), linguistics and journalism (through the issues of communication and information), philosophy (considered here at the same time as epistemology, philosophy of techniques, ethics and political philosophy), etc.

The training must be continuous and permanent because the digital world is in permanent change. This need of training can also be oriented to the different users of computerized systems, or them to not fall in the traps of manipulators. Insofar as they are considered themselves as manipulators, there is a need for the ethics of the digital usage which cannot be easy to interiorize if social conditions of living are not good and if the governing classes are in misconduct.

3.3. The Need for a Readjustment of Political Issues in the Digital Era

The digital world and its components such as social medias can seem difficult to manage for politicians. They are sometimes simple users like the others. There are some phenomena that are happening online and that can exist in real life. Political actors present for example on social networks are open to everybody, this with the risks that can be attached to them (divergent points of view, polemics, passive followers, etc.). The presence of someone on cyber space cannot then be improvised. What can be done is deeply linked to the strategic aspect evoked above. The strategy to be put in place should need some exigencies to be fulfilled:

- There must be constant and well-organized presence of the political actors on cyber tools. The lack of persistence, opportunism, amateurism and errors of content or of form are to be avoided;
- A third party should be the first to make public an important information whose publication is supposed to be done by a particular institution;
- All the new forms of political communication are translating a real need for a strategy of communication where social networks will be just tools;
- Political actors and administrations should be provided with all those tools and should really manage them efficiently;
- The legislation has to be adjusted (layers and specialists of law will have enough to do at this level being nationally or internationally, because cybernetics is more and more going beyond national boundaries);
- Politicians nowadays cannot do without Internet, the examples of Barack Obama in 2008 and 2012 who has used social networks for his electoral campaigns is illustrative. His campaign team was able to make visible his message on the social Web, to communicate it to potential voters, to ensure on their well-apprehension and diffusion, and to federate a community around a project, around a candidate. Similar situations are notably seen with other presidential elections in the United States of America between 2016 and 2024, and with many revolutions around the world enhanced by Internet;
- There should be a permanent examination of information communicated by citizens, decision-makers and their representatives. There should not be damages before controls to be taken into place. The following up of social media will permit to fight against organized crime and terrorist networks for instance.

The cybernetic world is like a box of Pandora. Only the new character of this tool cannot permit to really apprehend it. One also has to know that it has, in many aspects of its manifestation, just renew and amplified logics that are existing since years. However, the transposition to the digital has turned upside down the understanding by men of political issues. At the same time, it has deeply transformed the political existence of countries. At least four things are to be taken into account: there is multiplication of *pretended* social and political groups (of pressure), intimacy is become public [46], national political affairs are becoming international

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 163-164.

⁴⁵ André Liboire Tsala Mbani talks of a classical bank system being in hostage of a numeric neoliberalism. *Cf. ibid.*, p. 173.

⁴⁶ “As adults, we think of our home as a private space... For young people, this isn’t the case. They can’t control who comes in or goes out of their room. For them, the online world is more private because they have more control over what happens there.” Mark Zuckerberg

ones, there is a permanent tendency to manipulation by each link of the numeric chain may it be the politicians, the citizens, the political members of the opposition or the international community.

Finally, one has to retain that cybernetics frameworks are in their majority numeric tools of the expression of some economic and political imperialism. They constitute a new form of State in perpetual expansion, with its monopoly, its rules of belonging, its constitution, its functions of security, its banishment and its abuses that stop freedom; the worse thing being the misuse of that tool in national politics. One should rethink about the use that one make of numeric tools, may it be technically, legally, morally and politically. Failed to have an adapted legislation and of an emancipating education on the matter the users are easily victims of their own actions, of their ignorance or of their naivety.

CONCLUSION

Cybernetics world and its correlatives are becoming phenomena from which one cannot get away. Being not only from computer science domain, cybernetics is extended to many domains of human life. Even political affairs are concerned. At the origin, it was an interdisciplinary field. Science of the control and of the regulations of systems and information through machines, computers precisely, cybernetics is the set of theories on the processes of command and communication and their regulation with living beings, within machines and within sociological, political and economic systems. However, in the political context, it is facing many skids nowadays: cyber criminality, fake news, manipulations, to name just a few of them. The aim of this work was to question the dominant representations of cybernetic crises in their political dimension and implications. In this era marked by the transformation of public spaces through redefined digital mediations, new forms of communication are also raising with all the challenges they can occasioned. We have tried to critically analyze the emergence of these new forms of discourse and communication which disrupt and knock over some sociopolitical inertias. Cybernetics is, more and more, becoming, the fundamental framework of the expression of all the other contemporary political issues. We have noticed for instance that “social media can foster greater pluralism in political discourse” [47], opening at the same time the path to many skids. But there is also a hope: “Social media can enable citizens to become more effective political actors” [48]. However some conditions must be

quoted in Anne Dalsuet, *T'es sur Facebook? Qu'est-ce que les réseaux sociaux changes à l'amitié?*, op. cit., p. 134.

⁴⁷ Amanda Clarke, « Les médias sociaux : Utilisations politiques et conséquences pour la démocratie représentative », op. cit., p. 4.

fulfilled: New models must be established by intellectuals to describe the relationships that exist or can exist between cybernetics and politics/policies; all the intervening people in the political spheres should go to the school of the new technologies of information and communication in order to make a good use of them; and finally, the governing classes should readjust their strategies continuously in order to be harmonized with the actual needs. Conclusively, we can say with André Liboire Tsala Mbani that “we are witnessing a major communicational shift: from now on, it is no longer a matter of going towards the information that interests us, but rather the information that comes to us, without necessarily our approval, the only condition being that we are connected” [49].

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⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁴⁹ André Liboire Tsala Mbani, *Regard critique sur le fantasme contemporain de la « société de communication ». L'idéologie de la cybernétique*, op. cit., p. 133.

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