**Political communication(s)** is a subfield of [communication](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communication) and [political science](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_science) that is concerned with how [information spreads](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information_flow) and [influences](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_influence) [politics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics) and [policy makers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Policy_maker), the [news media](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/News_media) and [citizens](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Citizen).[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_communication#cite_note-1) Since the advent of the [World Wide Web](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Wide_Web), the amount of data to analyze has exploded, and researchers are shifting to computational methods to study the dynamics of political communication. In recent years, [machine learning](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machine_learning), [natural language processing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_language_processing), and [network analysis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_network_analysis) have become key tools in the subfield. It deals with the production, dissemination, procession and effects of information, both through [mass media](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mass_media) and [interpersonally](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interpersonal_communication), within a political context. This includes the study of the media, the analysis of [speeches by politicians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_speech) and those that are trying to influence the [political process](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_process), and formal and informal conversations among members of the public, among other aspects. The media acts as bridge between government and public. Political communication can be defined as the connection concerning politics and citizens and the interaction modes that connect these groups to each other. Whether the relationship is formed by the modes of persuasion, Pathos, Ethos or Logos.

The study and practice of communication focuses on the ways and means of expression of a political nature. Robert E. Denton and Gary C. Woodward, two important contributors to the field, in *Political Communication in America* characterize it as the ways and intentions of message senders to influence the political environment. This includes public discussion (e.g. political speeches, news media coverage, and ordinary citizens' talk) that considers who has authority to sanction, the allocation of public resources, who has authority to make decision, as well as social meaning like what makes someone American. In their words "the crucial factor that makes communication 'political' is not the source of a message, but its content and purpose." [[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_communication#cite_note-a-2) David L. Swanson and Dan Nimmo, also key members of this sub-discipline, define political communication as "the strategic use of communication to influence public knowledge, beliefs, and action on political matters." [[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_communication#cite_note-b-3) They emphasize the strategic nature of political communication, highlighting the role of [persuasion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persuasion) in [political discourse](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_discourse). Brian McNair provides a similar definition when he writes that political communication is "purposeful communication about politics." For McNair this means that this not only covers [verbal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Words) or [written](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Written) statements, but also [visual](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Visual) representations such as dress, make-up, hairstyle or logo design. With other words, it also includes all those aspects that develop a "political identity" or "image".[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_communication#cite_note-c-4) Reflecting on the relationship between political communication and contemporary agenda-building, Vian Bakir defines Strategic Political Communication (SPC) as comprising 'political communication that is [manipulative](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychological_manipulation) in intent, that utilises [social scientific](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_science) techniques and heuristic devices to understand human [motivation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Motivation), [human behavior](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_behavior) and the media environment, to inform effectively what should be communicated – encompassing its detail and overall direction – and what should be withheld, with the aim of taking into account and influencing [public opinion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_opinion), and creating [strategic alliances](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strategic_alliance) and an enabling environment for government policies – both at home and abroad'.[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_communication#cite_note-5)

There are many academic departments and schools around the world that specialize in political communication. These programs are housed in programs of communication, [journalism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_journalism) and [political science](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_science), among others. The study of political communication is clearly [interdisciplinary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interdisciplinary).

The [*Bush Administration*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presidency_of_George_W._Bush)*’s torture-for-intelligence policy*, initiated soon after [9/11](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/9/11), was kept secret for several years, as remains the level of complicity of many other nation-states' governments. While this secret policy was gradually revealed from 2004 onwards, initiated by the [Abu Ghraib](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abu_Ghraib) torture photos, the Bush administration engaged in SPC to publicly reframe and protect its secret policy. SPC included [*silencing*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silencing) and *persuasive* discursive activity.[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_communication#cite_note-6)

* [Discursive](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Discourse) activity aimed at generating *silences* comprised [plea bargains](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plea_bargain) that silenced detainees, censoring Guantánamo detainees’ descriptions of their own torture in pre–trial hearings, deals with journalists to censor or withhold information that affected national security, weeding out personal sousveillance of torture online, suppression of visual [sousveillance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sousveillance" \o "Sousveillance) of torture while [courts–martial](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Courts%E2%80%93martial) and criminal investigations proceeded; destruction of videotapes of CIA interrogations; and withholding key information from intelligence oversight committees. These position those in the know as part of an elite force policing the public sphere to keep the wider public and their representatives ignorant of unpalatable but necessary official practices, relegating the likely emotional and/or moral public dissent towards such practices as unaffordable niceties.
* [*Persuasive*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persuasive) [discursive](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Discourse) activity included the propagation and repetition of a few key messages consistently over time, with the aim of misdirecting [public attention](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Public_attention&action=edit&redlink=1) from the silence–generating activities. Key Bush Administration messages were that detainees were evil, dangerous [terrorists](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_on_terror); that the practice of extraordinary rendition was normal and pragmatic; that interrogation techniques, although harsh, were legal (apart from isolated acts of abuse), necessary and successful in preventing future acts of terror; and that Guantánamo was a model prison. Key British Administration messages were of initial ministerial ignorance (until 2004) of American intelligence agencies’ new interrogation strategies, after which intelligence agencies’ guidelines were tightened; and of no direct involvement of British intelligence agencies in extraordinary rendition. Key messages common to both British and American Administrations were that the Abu Ghraib sousveillance and similar visual evidence involving British soldiers were examples of isolated abuse rather than a torture policy from which lessons had been learned regarding Army training and interrogation guidance (new Army guidelines on interrogation were produced under the Bush and Blair Administrations). These key messages were propagated through a range of discursive activity (including [press conferences](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Press_conference) and media interviews, authorised [leaks](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/News_leak), real–time reporting, official investigations and [public inquiries](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_inquiries)) and were periodically bolstered by selective public release of once–secret documents. The consistency of key messages over time, together with the offering up of specific evidence, gives the appearance of official disclosure and truth–telling, positioning the public as a force to which political administrations willingly hold themselves accountable. However, the strategic generation of key messages and selectivity of supporting information presented across all these discursive modes means that full [accountability](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Accountability) is avoided, while the public is potentially fooled into thinking that [justice](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Justice) has been served, all–the–while being constant targets of manipulation.