

Challenges and Opportunities of Political Communication: A Conversation with Meltem Seker

Digital platforms are reshaping politics. In this shift, the role of the political communicator is becoming more popular every day, as someone who manages public messages, engages with the media, and helps build trust while clearly presenting policy positions. Among those navigating this new frontier is Meltem Seker, a German political scientist and content creator known online as “politischmeltem”. By combining youth-oriented storytelling with highly sensitive issues such as migration policies and democratic erosion, Seker has carved out a unique space for a young, diverse audience. Some of her most impactful posts include a video series explaining Germany's migration policy reforms using simple analogies, and a widely shared breakdown on how disinformation is spread through TikTok's algorithm.

During an EPIS Interview on 18 June 2026, conducted by Marco Valerio Tauro, Seker reflected on her intellectual journey, the challenges of algorithm-driven platforms like TikTok, and the delicate balance between creative freedom and responsibility for accuracy in modern political discourse.

From Academic Theory to the TikTok Algorithm

Seker's entry into the world of digital communication was born out of the quiet disruption of the pandemic. "I started during the COVID-19 lockdown," she recalled. "I initially resisted downloading TikTok, thinking I was too old for it, but boredom eventually led me to it." What began as a space for lighthearted videos quickly shifted into mature content as her academic background in political science progressed.

Driven initially by personal encounters with systemic biases, Seker found her views changing as her education deepened. "I began my journey leaning far-left, largely because of my personal experiences with racism and sexism," she explained. "However, as I continued my education, read more, and gained a deeper understanding of political theory, my perspectives—and consequently my content—shifted toward the center, sometimes even center-right." Having moved across these ideological boundaries, she now navigates entirely different political bubbles with rare fluency.

The Intersection of Background and Political Communication

When discussing how her personal background shapes her approach to public political discourse, Seker emphasizes a commitment to mutual respect. "Respect is my primary factor; I always aim to have solid arguments while listening to others," she said.

For Seker, clarity and precision are non-negotiable. "Particularly when engaging in sensitive topics like migration, I make a conscious effort to differentiate between criticizing migration policies and racism". Drawing on her personal upbringing in a Turkish-German family, she uses social networks to offer constructive critiques of radical Islam. Furthermore, the core issues shaping her content are based on the concerns she cares about most: migration, sexism, democracy, and extremism.

Navigating Pressure and Expertise

Still, political dialogues online have become more delicate in the last few years, and it is necessary for creators to be very cautious when approaching them. Operating within this sector comes with great pressure, especially because of the intense reaction audiences have regarding the expressed opinion on controversial topics.

Yet, Seker has established firm boundaries around her own expertise. "I do feel pressure to address certain topics", she argued, " but if I don't feel secure in my knowledge of a subject—such as complex geopolitics or international relations—I choose not to talk about it."

What troubles her most is the reluctance of qualified voices to enter the social media sphere. If the majority of people talking in front of a camera do not have the competence to discuss certain issues, and those who have the knowledge to do so are unwilling, then less reliable voices will dominate the network, creating a dangerous imbalance.

"I believe it is harmful when non-experts dominate highly complicated debates. There is a vacuum in the digital space, and when experts, journalists, or politicians are too hesitant to use apps like TikTok, less-informed voices or even purveyors of propaganda fill that void." To counter this, she actively encourages academics, policy experts, and traditional reporters to build a digital presence, viewing their participation as essential to the health of online discourse.

Challenges in Democratic Communication

Democratic communication threats are central to Seker's work. Although she highlights misinformation and declining public confidence as main issues, for her these are symptoms of a much larger, systemic problem: the underlying algorithms of major platforms.

"They are all interconnected, but the algorithm is what worries me most," Seker argued. "It leads to radicalization and societal polarization, which in turn fuels distrust in government and the rise of populist or anti-democratic parties." Moreover, she pointed to a critical but under-analyzed threat to democratic stability. "The role of bots and foreign interference is a severe issue that we do not discuss enough, mostly because it is difficult to prove."

A related concern involves the decentralized political content creation, which has theoretically democratized public discourse by giving everyone a voice. However, does this contribute positively to people's democratic engagement by making policy easier to understand?

Seker pointed out that the catch is that, in theory, everyone is free to express themselves, but in practice, the behaviour of the algorithm does not prioritize open discussion.

"You are ultimately dependent on the algorithm, which often incentivizes provocative or populist content over nuanced, long-form explanations." Rather than acting as open, decentralized forums for cross-ideological debate, social networks frequently function as echo chambers. "The reality is that users often retreat into ideological bubbles where they fight rather than converse."

Institutional vs. Independent Communication

The shift into online political communication also makes it harder for traditional political figures to successfully adapt in this context. The crucial question is whether these figures can maintain their credibility. Seker believes true authenticity remains out of reach for them. "Politicians are bound by party programs and cannot be truly critical of their own policies; the public senses this and often distrusts them accordingly." Despite this, she maintains that their digital presence is necessary. "They must be on social media because it is part of our daily rhythm. It can help build sympathy and show that politicians are human, charismatic, and humorous."

Journalistic Duty in the Digital Age

As new media has replaced traditional news sources, journalism has struggled to find its space in this environment. The web made information faster and more dynamic, and audiences have adapted accordingly, making it difficult for long explanations and narratives to hold attention.

In spite of this, validity must be defended, no matter the format. In fact, the most pragmatic challenge people like Seker face is balancing individual creative freedom with the journalistic responsibility to remain accurate. She candidly acknowledges that social networks require a fundamental departure from legacy reporting styles.

"You cannot do 'proper' professional journalism on social media because it is difficult to capture audience attention for long periods," Seker explained. "You have to utilize what I call 'boulevard journalism'—using provocative titles and a populist style to reach the masses."

For Seker, the key is striking a compromise that respects both the audience's attention span and the truth. "My middle ground is to start a video with a provocative statement to hook the viewer, then deliver the most accurate information possible within a two-minute window," she said. "It isn't traditional journalism, but it is a necessary adaptation."

Advice for the Next Generation

When asked what advice she would give to students and young professionals in political science or international relations who want to build a credible voice in today's political communication, Seker remarked on a clear and practical attribute: visibility to be heard and patience to grow, as building a following takes time. She also emphasized the importance of intellectual humility, urging newcomers to follow trends but to resist commenting on every headline. "Do not let yourself be pressured into speaking on topics you do not fully understand," she cautioned. Seker views public communication as a civic responsibility that requires perseverance. Firmly reiterating that "the quality of the public discourse depends on knowledgeable people showing up to contribute."

