

Political Consciousness and Youth: Political Participation Tendencies of New Generations

Siyasal Bilinç ve Gençlik: Yeni Nesillerin Siyasal Katılım Eğilimleri

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the transformation of political consciousness in the postmodern era within the context of media and identity politics. Unlike the universal ideologies of modernism, postmodernism gives rise to new forms of political consciousness grounded in personal experience and fragmented identities. The rise of identity politics, feminist and postcolonial movements, and the politicization of gender and cultural differences are presented as core components of this transformation. These changes are theoretically framed through the perspectives of postmodern thinkers such as Foucault, Lyotard, and Baudrillard. The article provides an in-depth analysis of the role of media-especially social media-in shaping political awareness. Generation Z's distinct information sources and aesthetically-driven political behavior, along with concepts like "clicktivism," are considered integral elements of this transformation. The Azerbaijani case is explored as a specific focal point. As a country emerging from post-Soviet modernism, Azerbaijan presents a compelling tension between national identity discourse and the digital cosmopolitanism of its youth in the transformation of political consciousness. In conclusion, the article demonstrates that postmodern political consciousness is characterized not only by the collapse of traditional structures but also by the emergence of new forms of expression and political participation.

Keywords:

Postmodernism,

Political
Consciousness,

Identity Politics,

Social Media,

Azerbaijan,

ÖZET

Bu çalışma siyasal bilincin postmodern dönemde medya ve kimlik siyaseti bağlamında geçirdiği dönüşümü incelemektedir. Modernizmin evrensel ideolojilerinden farklı olarak, postmodernizm kişisel deneyime ve parçalı kimliklere dayanan yeni siyasal bilinç biçimlerinin ortaya çıkmasına yol açmaktadır. Kimlik siyaseti, feminist ve postkolonyal hareketlerin yükselişi ile toplumsal cinsiyet ve kültürel farklılıkların siyasallaşması bu dönüşümün temel bileşenleri olarak sunulmaktadır. Bu değişimler Foucault, Lyotard ve Baudrillard gibi postmodern düşünürlerin perspektifleri çerçevesinde teorik olarak ele alınmaktadır. Makale özellikle sosyal medya olmak üzere medyanın siyasal farkındalığın şekillenmesindeki rolüne dair derinlemesine bir analiz sunmaktadır. Z kuşağının kendine özgü bilgi kaynakları ve estetik yönü ağır basan siyasal davranışları ile "tıklamacılık" (clicktivism) gibi kavramlar, bu dönüşümün ayrılmaz bir parçası olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Azerbaycan örneği özel bir odak noktası olarak incelenmektedir. Post-Sovyet modernizminden çıkan bir ülke olarak Azerbaycan, siyasal bilincin dönüşümünde ulusal kimlik söylemi ile gençliğin dijital kozmopolitizmi arasında dikkat çekici bir gerilim sunmaktadır. Sonuç olarak, makale postmodern siyasal bilincin yalnızca geleneksel yapıların çöküşüyle değil, aynı zamanda yeni ifade biçimlerinin ve siyasal katılım modellerinin ortaya çıkışıyla karakterize edildiğini göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler:

Postmodernizm,

Siyasal Bilinç,

Kimlik Siyaseti,

Sosyal Medya,

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1. INTRODUCTION

The transition from modernism to postmodernism is understood as an intellectual, cultural, and technological transformation that fundamentally reshaped the ways in which individuals and societies relate to the world, as well as the mechanisms through which political consciousness is formed. In the modernist period, political ideologies grounded in universal conclusions, grand narratives, and collective projects were dominant. According to the prevailing belief of that era, human cognition could advance solely through science and rationality, while the development of societies was thought to be achievable through adherence to large-scale, comprehensive plans. However, the mass social movements of the 1960s–1970s, together with the increasing visibility of ethnic minorities, environmental activists, and other groups expressing their subjective experiences, placed universalist doctrines under considerable pressure. Postmodern theory offers a clear explanation for this process. Jean-François Lyotard’s critique of postmodernism—best known through the notion of “*the end of grand narratives*”—also questions the foundational sources of political legitimacy (Browning, 2000). Under conditions of globalization, the flexible production regime of global capitalism, the expansion of information technologies, and the transformation of the lifestyle of the new generation have contributed to the reconstruction of political consciousness around fragmented identities.

This fragmented reconstruction has directly impacted the participatory mechanisms that lie at the very core of democratic systems. Indeed, political participation forms the foundation of democratic thought and democratic politics. In its broadest sense, political participation refers to the attitudes, behaviors, or actions that real or legal persons and communities perform or abstain from in order to determine, influence, or change political decision-making mechanisms at the local, regional, national, and global levels. While the traditional modernist paradigm largely restricted political participation to macro-actions such as voting, party memberships, or operating within institutional hierarchies, the postmodern era has blurred these boundaries. Historically, political participation has functioned as an essential mechanism of democratic politics in terms of providing representation opportunities to various segments of society and establishing a certain balance and reconciliation within society (Çiçek, 2022:32). However, under postmodern conditions, this quest for macro-institutional balance has frequently been replaced by micro-level identity struggles, networked mobilization, and a conscious avoidance of institutional politics.

To understand such radical transformations in political consciousness and participatory patterns, one must analyze the foundational socialization mechanisms through which an individual links themselves to society. Every society is based on social ties that are established inside its own integrity-based realm. Within this realm, there are particular power dynamics, privileges, status differences, and labor divisions. People discover the cultural values embedded in the social structure and relational web of the hierarchical society in which they live. In other words, a person comes into that world having a clear sense of who they are; a provided and defined space is created for a person by their name, last name, gender, family, race, religion, nation, or class written on their identity (Çiçek, 2023:433).

Participatory democracy refers to “*ensuring that the public can consistently have a say in policies that concern them and can participate in politics in the broadest possible way through various channels.*” It also seeks to widen and intensify the participation of those of voting age in discussing public issues, forming public opinion, and taking part in decision-making (Yaman, 2018:137-138). Consequently, participatory democracy is “*a system based on social sovereignty rather than individual sovereignty*” (Üste, 2011:41). While participatory democracy serves such an important function, depoliticization (*which stands in direct opposition to it*) poses significant risks for the country’s future (Turan, 2023:881).

Socialization, therefore, describes the exact process of becoming a member of society and assuming a position while feeling the strain of one’s own identity, personality, and external factors. Although socialization is frequently formed by the given identity and the demands of the environment, the individual is not merely a passive recipient. A person can occasionally deviate from the position that has been allocated to him or her by actively seeking out a social role; thus, a person might adopt an identity or role that differs from the expectations and social roles that are placed upon him or her (Çiçek, 2023:433). Consequently, socialization describes a dialectical process by which society and individuals influence and change one another, and similarly, political socialization is the term used to describe how this process plays out in the political sphere (Çiçek, 2023:434). The technological and cultural fluidity introduced by the postmodern era has liberated this political socialization process from rigidly prescribed identities, allowing newer generations to develop fluid political consciousness through self-selected digital, micro-identities.

In this context, the aim of the article is to analyze the transformation of political consciousness in the postmodern era through the prism of the interaction between media and identity politics. An interdisciplinary approach has been employed in the study. Using contemporary perspectives from political theory, media sociology, and identity studies, an analytical assessment has been conducted, supported by empirical examples from various countries as well as the case of Azerbaijan. The article examines the multifaceted effects shaped by the development of media technologies, the intergenerational dynamics of identity politics, and factors such as diaspora, culture, and social media platforms on emerging forms of political participation.

The findings suggest that although young people often experience disillusionment with traditional political systems, they nevertheless demonstrate strong positions on issues such as social justice, environmental protection, and related concerns. To analyze the political participation tendencies of the younger generation, it is essential to refer both to theoretical concepts and real-world examples from the contemporary global environment. Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to examine the modern forms of political participation characteristic of new generations-particularly Generation Z and millennials-and the specific features of their political consciousness within an interactive and global context.

The research employs an analytical-descriptive approach, incorporating relevant theoretical frameworks (*political socialization, critical consciousness, non-institutional forms of participation, and digital activism*) and analyzing empirical cases from various countries. The article reviews youth activism ranging from France to Nepal and Brazil. It is among the first Azerbaijani-language studies to explain the transformation of postmodern political consciousness through empirical examples that take into account the comparative and locally specific features of both Western and non-Western societies.

2. THE RISE OF IDENTITY POLITICS

Identity politics is defined as a political approach that explains the articulation of political demands by individuals and social groups through identity markers such as ethnicity, religion, language, gender, sexual orientation, cultural affiliation, and similar characteristics rather than through class, ideology, or economic interests. This approach places at its center the struggles of social groups for visibility, recognition, representation, and equal access to rights, arguing that processes of political participation are shaped by diverse identity experiences. Particularly after the 1960s, with the rise of women's movements, ethnic identity movements, human rights struggles, and new social movements, identity politics became an important field of inquiry within political science literature. According to the identity politics perspective, political conflicts are not shaped solely by the distribution of economic resources; issues such as recognition, cultural visibility, belonging, and the acceptance of differences also constitute important determinants of political processes (Göle, 2017; Keyman, 2013; Yılmaz, 2023).

The rise of identity politics in the second half of the twentieth century fundamentally transformed the modes of struggle employed by various social groups. Feminist, anti-colonial, Black liberation, and queer movements shifted away from universalist class-based discourse and brought to the forefront the previously unarticulated problems of marginalized social strata. For instance, the civil rights movement that gained momentum in the United States and Europe from the 1960s onward challenged prevailing understandings of equality and citizenship; the women's liberation movement, with its slogan "*the personal is political*," reframed private experiences as political struggles; and the Stonewall uprising and subsequent AIDS activism exposed the limitations of heteronormative systems. At the same time, student movements in Europe emerged as another significant dynamic (Zariç ve Erdem, 2021). The students who rebelled against the established order in France, the United States, and other European countries during the 1960s also influenced student groups in Turkey. This indicates that postmodernist movements also had an impact in Turkey during the 1970–1980 period (Erdem, 2025b:237). These movements demonstrated that political conflicts extend beyond economic and class inequalities and encompass cultural, gender-based, and ethnic differences. By revealing the multiple ways in which power operates, they challenged dominant structures of authority (de Jong, 2017).

This approach, often associated with postmodern theory, manifested itself in three principal dimensions. First was the emphasis on the historically and socially constructed nature of identity. Philosophically, Foucault critiqued the notion of a sovereign, autonomous subject, arguing that human identity is shaped by regimes of knowledge, discursive practices, and disciplinary mechanisms. Second was the creation of counter-narratives that oppose dominant cultural frameworks. For example, the works of women writers and filmmakers repeatedly challenge patriarchal language and visual representation, while postcolonial perspectives proposed by non-European

intellectuals reconstruct colonial imaginaries. The third dimension is the claim that broad-based social solidarity is unattainable—a stance that highlights the tensions between politics and identity (Greer, 2014).

As a result of identity politics, analytical frameworks increasingly tend to categorize actors of political struggle into rigid identity-based groups. Within feminist movements, for instance, significant divisions emerged among liberal, radical, Marxist, postcolonial, and queer currents. This fragmentation has led some critics to argue that identity politics distracts from structural forms of violence and systemic class inequality. Others contend that such movements are essential, as grand universalist ideas often silence or marginalize minority groups. This debate remains relevant today: on one side stand left-populist approaches focused on broad social equality and universal rights, while on the other are perspectives prioritizing the recognition of diverse experiences and identities. In the postmodern era, politics is no longer organized around a single shared experience or unifying ideology but instead around a mosaic of multiple, intersecting identities (Alizada, 2021).

This fragmentation has a dual effect: on the one hand, it encourages individuals to participate in political processes through their personal narratives and lived experiences; on the other hand, it deepens societal divisions, complicating collective organization and coordinated action. However, the landscape also has positive dimensions: identity politics has created a broad platform for articulating long-neglected forms of social injustice and exclusion. As a result, various countries and international organizations have implemented substantial legislative reforms, such as gender quotas, anti-discrimination laws, and the legal recognition of cultural diversity. Thus, the transformation of political consciousness in the postmodern era is characterized not only by fragmentation but also by the emergence of new opportunities.

3. THE INFLUENCE OF MEDIA ON THE FORMATION OF POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Media is defined as the totality of communication tools and processes that enable the transmission of information, ideas, values, and symbols between individuals and society. In its traditional sense, media encompasses mass communication tools such as newspapers, radio, and television; however, with the development of digital technologies, it has evolved into a multi-layered structure that also includes internet-based platforms, social media networks, and online content production mechanisms. Beyond being merely a technical tool for transmitting information, media functions as an important mechanism of socialization that influences the ways individuals perceive social events, their political attitudes, and their processes of identity construction. For this reason, media performs decisive functions in the formation of public opinion, the shaping of political consciousness, and the direction of political participation behaviors. Particularly with the process of digitalization, media has produced an interactive public sphere in which individuals have become both consumers and producers of content; this development has significantly transformed the structure of political communication and political consciousness processes (Aziz, 2019; Babacan, 2022).

It is impossible to fully understand how political consciousness has transformed in postmodern society without considering the role of the media. In the later stages of modernism, television, radio, cinema, and print journalism created a broad flow of information within society. However, with the advent of the internet, smartphones, and social media platforms, the production and circulation of information have undergone fundamental change. Thinkers such as Mark Poster argue that electronic media have dissolved the boundaries between word, sound, and image, generating new modes of communication and novel forms of subjectivity. In many respects, these technologies have created opportunities for the expansion of democratic participation. On social media, individuals simultaneously function as consumers and producers of information; people can disseminate their views to wider audiences, while traditional media and state institutions have lost their monopoly over information control (Erdem, 2025a).

For example, during the “*Arab Spring*,” the coordination and organization of mass protests—spreading from Tunisia to Egypt, Syria, and beyond—became possible through platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. In the United States, the “*Black Lives Matter*” movement made extensive use of videos circulating on social media to expose police violence. Similarly, the #MeToo movement enabled thousands of women to publicly disclose experiences of sexual harassment and assault, breaking a long-standing silence. These cases illustrate that the digital environment is not merely a venue for information exchange but also a platform on which struggles for social justice are organized and through which individuals connect to form global-scale movements (Gethin and Pons, 2024).

On the other hand, the same technologies have given rise to the normalization of “*hyperreality*” and “*simulation*.” According to the French philosopher Jean Baudrillard, simulation represents a condition in which imitations of

reality become indistinguishable from reality itself. In other words, people increasingly engage not with reality per se but with its mediated representations—its “*simulacra*.” For instance, 24-hour news cycles, reality television, video games, and AI-generated virtual characters reshape society’s relationship with reality. Individuals evaluate events not as they occur, but as they are presented on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. Phenomena such as hologram concerts and deepfake technologies further erode the boundaries between the real and the virtual, often rendering simulation more compelling and persuasive than actual events.

These developments have significant implications for the formation of political consciousness. First, the abundance of information and the market-driven presentation of media content divert public attention away from substantive issues. Many consumers believe they stay informed by watching short videos, yet remain unaware of context and background. Second, the algorithms governing social media platforms expose users primarily to content that aligns with their preexisting preferences. As a result, individuals become surrounded by information that reinforces their viewpoints, limiting exposure to alternative perspectives and trapping them in informational silos. This deepens societal divisions, obstructs dialogue, and facilitates the spread of conspiracy theories. Third, the proliferation of fake news and “*post-truth*” politics increasingly influences public opinion. Digital misinformation can manipulate electoral outcomes, target minority groups, and drive individuals toward radical ideologies (Umur, 2025).

Against the backdrop of these negative tendencies, developing critical media literacy has become essential. Academic institutions and civil society organizations have launched educational initiatives aimed at strengthening digital competencies. In several countries, schools teach children how to assess the reliability of information sources, verify claims through fact-checking, and recognize visual manipulation. Simultaneously, the ethical responsibilities of influencers and media organizations active on social platforms have become a subject of growing discussion. Consequently, in the postmodern era, the media has become a powerful instrument that can both enhance democratic participation and contribute to the commercialization and distortion of reality.

4. DIGITAL POLITICS AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN THE CASE OF AZERBAIJAN

The transformation of political consciousness in the postmodern era is not confined to Western societies; under the influence of globalization, this process extends to non-Western contexts, including Azerbaijan. In the post-Soviet region, and particularly in countries such as Azerbaijan, these transformations occur within the interplay of the Soviet legacy and the influx of global media and capital. Following independence, the state ideology in Azerbaijan was primarily constructed around national identity and territorial integrity. For decades, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and international competition over energy resources shaped the political agenda. However, in the past decade, the widespread diffusion of the internet and social media—especially among urban youth—has facilitated the emergence and expression of multifaceted cultural and political identities.

In the early 2010s, platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter became central channels for youth activism. Youth movements active between 2011 and 2013 organized calls to action on social networks around a variety of political and social demands. In this process, social media functioned both as a tool for rapid mobilization and as an independent platform for publicizing protests and disseminating information (Çiçek, 2024:70).

Identity politics within Azerbaijani society operates on both national and subnational levels, generating internal dynamics. On the one hand, after the victory in the Second Karabakh War, the discourse of national unity became more prominently promoted. This discourse emphasizes the strengthening of the nation-state, the commemoration of martyrs, and the idealization of war heroes. On the other hand, issues such as women’s rights, environmental challenges, and regional socioeconomic inequalities are increasingly articulated through social media. These topics have given rise to a new generation of bloggers, podcasts, and YouTube channels. Additionally, the information warfare conducted by regional and international actors is evident in Azerbaijan’s digital sphere. In the context of the information struggle with Armenia, both sides promote competing narratives across digital platforms, with Armenian sources often engaging in news manipulation. Under such conditions, the weakness of independent journalism and fact-checking institutions contributes to the further spread of misinformation. At the same time, diaspora organizations and international human rights groups use social media to support Azerbaijani communities and inform the global public about ongoing pressures.

Taken together, these factors highlight the localized specificities of how political consciousness is formed within digital environments in postmodern conditions. For the younger generation, the internet functions both as a means of self-expression and as a window to the wider world. Yet this window is not always open and unrestricted; it is shaped by constraints such as censorship, surveillance, and the influence of international actors. These dynamics

underscore the complexity of digital political socialization in contemporary Azerbaijan and reveal how global and local forces intersect in shaping youth political identity.

5. INTERGENERATIONAL DYNAMICS

In the postmodern era, identity politics is not limited to the struggles of specific social groups; it is also accompanied by growing political and ideological divergences between generations. In particular, members of Generation Z—those who have grown up immersed in digital environments from early childhood—approach politics differently from previous generations. For these young people, neither newspapers nor television serve as primary sources of information. Instead, they obtain news and interpretive frameworks through social networks, podcasts, memes, video games and gaming platforms (Elerian et al., 2024). Their identities are no longer defined solely by ethnic, gender, or class categories; rather, their preferred music genres, fashion styles, favorite game characters, and online behavioral patterns have also become markers of political orientation and worldview (Elerian vd., 2024). For example, the involvement of K-pop fandoms in campaigns against police violence in the United States or the participation of gaming communities in environmental protests demonstrates that cultural subcultures can also become bases for political mobilization.

These generational differences are clearly observable in Azerbaijan as well. For the generation shaped by the Soviet period, collectivist thinking, a paternalistic role of the state, and centralized media constituted normative frameworks. Many still rely primarily on television as their main source of information. In contrast, contemporary youth acquire knowledge and worldviews from the internet, online courses, foreign television series, and gaming platforms. In addition to Azerbaijani, they consume information in English and Turkish, resulting in more cosmopolitan perspectives. They exhibit heightened sensitivity toward issues such as gender equality, environmental sustainability, and personal freedoms. However, this cosmopolitan outlook can sometimes lead to intergenerational tensions within families: conservative parents may perceive their daughters' freedom of expression on social media as threatening, while younger individuals often regard their parents' attachment to national and traditional values as outdated or restrictive (Arnett, 2019).

A central concept within identity politics is “*intersectionality*,” a term introduced by American legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw. The core idea is that individuals do not experience discrimination along a single axis of identity. Rather, lived experience is shaped by the intersection of multiple identities—gender, race, class, sexual orientation, disability, and other factors. For instance, a woman who belongs to an ethnic minority and has a disability does not face discrimination solely as a woman but experiences multilayered marginalization resulting from the convergence of these three factors. This framework helps illustrate the complexity and multidimensionality of struggles for justice in the postmodern period, as social structures such as patriarchy, racism, and class privilege frequently intersect to shape people's lives (Afyonoğlu, 2020).

One notable development is that identity politics is now appropriated not only by social movements but also by corporations. This trend is often described as “*woke capitalism*.” Companies integrate social and political slogans into their marketing strategies to strengthen their public image and boost sales. For example, major technology corporations add the pride flag to their logos or publicly endorse “*Black Lives Matter*,” while prominent fashion brands launch campaigns promoting feminism. However, many activists criticize such initiatives for reducing political ideas to commercialized images and transforming them into commodities, arguing that the primary motive is profit rather than genuine commitment. On the other hand, such campaigns can draw attention to issues that might otherwise remain invisible. Consequently, there is ongoing debate regarding whether such practices offer meaningful social opportunities or pose risks of superficiality and co-optation.

Another critical dimension of the digital world involves surveillance and data collection. Social media platforms compile vast amounts of information about users, analyzing their political inclinations, preferences, consumer tendencies, and even psychological profiles. The well-known Cambridge Analytica scandal revealed the extent to which big data manipulation can shape electoral campaigns and influence voter behavior. Moreover, such surveillance is not conducted solely for commercial purposes. In many countries, including Azerbaijan, online activity is monitored, security agencies track digital communication, and legal measures are sometimes taken based on online expression. The term “*digital authoritarianism*” has emerged to describe this new mode of control, illustrating that while information flows are more open and accessible in postmodern media, states and large corporations have simultaneously acquired stronger capacities for oversight and influence (Geneva Centre for Security Policy, 2023).

In addition, new terms such as “*clicktivism*” and “*slacktivism*” have been introduced to describe emerging forms of political participation in the digital age. These refer to activities conducted primarily online that require minimal physical involvement—for example, signing digital petitions, sharing hashtags, or changing profile photos in response to political events. Some critics regard these actions as passive and ineffective, arguing that they do not lead to tangible political change. Others contend that such digital practices play an important role in shaping public consciousness, drawing attention to issues, and influencing social agendas. Local campaigns such as #JusticeForJamala or #İrəliAzerbaijan have mobilized thousands of users in a short period of time. Although these campaigns may not always translate into street-level activism, their symbolic and awareness-raising impact is nonetheless significant. Thus, digital activism functions both as a preliminary stage for real-world political change and as an expression of the increasing aestheticization of politics in the postmodern era.

Looking to the international context further clarifies these trends. The COVID-19 pandemic, which swept across the world in 2020, radically altered daily life and compelled nearly all social interactions to shift online. Remote work and education, restrictions on public gatherings, and limits on social contact led individuals to rely heavily on the internet for both entertainment and protest. During this period, protests against police violence in the United States gained widespread digital support. In China and Iran, individuals shared political discontent online in more covert forms due to restrictions on physical demonstrations. In Azerbaijan, similar patterns emerged: unemployed citizens expressed frustrations regarding social assistance, and problems with online education became widely discussed across social networks.

These developments reaffirmed that in the postmodern era, social media functions not merely as a tool for information dissemination but as a powerful social force permeating all areas of life—from politics and education to public dissent and everyday communication. The pandemic underscored the scale and transformative potential of this digital influence.

The role of diasporas constitutes another crucial yet often overlooked element in the formation of political consciousness in the postmodern period. For hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis living in cities such as Toronto, Berlin, and Moscow, platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram, and YouTube serve as tools for maintaining ties with the homeland and connecting diaspora communities. They discuss war developments, cultural events, and political initiatives online; organize rallies through digital calls to action; and address petitions to foreign governments. Such transnational activism illustrates that identity in the postmodern era is multilayered rather than singular. Azerbaijanis living abroad preserve their attachment to national identity while simultaneously absorbing the legal norms, political values, and cultural practices of their host countries. Feminist groups, environmental activists, and other ideologically oriented diaspora communities often collaborate with counterparts in Azerbaijan, sharing experiences and exchanging ideas. These interactions contribute to the circulation of new concepts and the strengthening of ideological debates.

At the same time, art and popular culture play an increasingly significant role in shaping political consciousness in the postmodern era. Music, cinema, literature, and visual art are not merely forms of entertainment but serve as platforms through which individuals express political positions and communicate messages to society. In recent years, young Azerbaijani musicians producing rap and hip-hop have openly addressed major social issues, and these genres have become especially popular among youth as tools of both resistance and personal expression.

Moreover, street art—including graffiti and installation work—is used to disseminate social and political messages in public spaces. Theatre performances and independent films frequently address taboo subjects such as gender stereotypes, war-related psychological trauma, familial tensions, and social pressures. When circulated on social media, these modes of expression reach wider audiences and shape public opinion. Thus, culture and popular art occupy an important place in the formation of postmodern political consciousness, enabling the amplification of diverse voices and facilitating their diffusion across different layers of society.

6. YOUTH POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT AND EMERGING TRENDS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

In the era of the internet and social media, the nature of youth political participation has changed significantly. Digital platforms not only provide avenues for young people to express their political positions, but also enable them to connect with like-minded individuals and to build transnational movements. Platforms such as Instagram, X (*formerly Twitter*), and TikTok have become spaces where youth freely articulate opinions and launch political campaigns. Through hashtags, tags, and direct-messaging functions, young people rapidly establish connections and coordinate collective actions. In recent years, the “*Fridays for Future*” climate strike movement and anti-

racism protests such as “*Black Lives Matter*” have gained global momentum largely due to the expanding political activism of youth on social media.

In other words, a movement that begins in virtual space can mobilize tens of thousands of young people in the physical world within a short period of time. There are concrete examples demonstrating that social media constitutes a powerful mechanism for amplifying youth voices. For example, in Nepal in 2020, a 29-year-old activist used social networks to protest the government’s public health policies during the COVID-19 pandemic, leading thousands of young people to participate in peaceful demonstrations in Kathmandu and other major cities. This case illustrated that an initiative launched online can trigger real political change: as a result of public pressure from young people, the Nepalese government revised several pandemic-related measures. Similarly, in South Korea, K-pop fans organized online campaigns opposing the construction of a coal-powered plant near the popular Haeundae Beach, ultimately contributing to a reconsideration of the project. In several Arab countries, football fan groups (ultras) emerged as unexpected political actors, playing a key role in protests against authoritarian regimes during the Arab Spring (Browning, 2000).

These examples demonstrate that even in the absence of traditional political identities such as party membership or formal leadership roles, young people can organize under various social groupings and exert significant political influence. Another important feature of digital activism is its inclusivity and speed of communication. Social networks transcend geographical borders, enabling international solidarity among youth. For instance, young people across different countries use Instagram and X to create pages and groups dedicated to climate change, facilitating the exchange of strategies, experiences, and advice. Digital platforms also help bring long-neglected issues—such as gender discrimination, minority rights, and police brutality—into mainstream public debate, making them trending topics through youth-driven efforts.

In this regard, digital activism illustrates how youth indirectly shape the political agenda. Even traditional media outlets are sometimes compelled to respond to public sentiment generated by youth on social networks. Nevertheless, digital political participation is not without criticism. Some scholars argue that online activism often does not progress beyond “*slacktivism*”—a term used to describe minimal-effort political engagement. This refers to situations in which individuals limit their activism to sharing hashtags or signing online petitions, without engaging in concrete action in the offline world. For instance, creating a protest group on Facebook or posting a statement on Twitter may be perceived as meaningful engagement, although no tangible political activity occurs beyond the online domain (Alizada, 2021).

Social media also carries risks, such as the spread of disinformation and the amplification of hate speech. Therefore, when assessing the effectiveness of digital activism, commentators often emphasize that online mobilization should be complemented by practical measures in the real world. Nevertheless, as demonstrated by the Nepal case, online mobilization can indeed lead to concrete outcomes, as digital engagement can be transformed into demands for real-world political change.

7. CONCLUSION

The transformation of political consciousness in the postmodern era is not merely a theoretical shift but a multifaceted process that extends across all dimensions of everyday life—from information consumption and identity formation to political participation and cultural modes of expression. This period is characterized by an understanding of the individual as a subject who articulates political positions not only through grand ideologies but also through personal experiences, visual symbols, cultural choices, and digital presence. The analyses presented in this article demonstrate that political consciousness in the postmodern condition must be evaluated through both the lens of fragmentation and the emergence of new opportunities. In this regard, several key conclusions can be drawn;

- The rise of identity politics has moved to the center of political consciousness in the postmodern era, replacing universalist class-based discourses with experience-oriented demands of diverse social groups.
- The development of media and information technologies, particularly social media, has reshaped forms of political participation—facilitating the coordination of global movements while simultaneously weakening the connection to reality through the spread of misinformation and the phenomenon of hyperreality.

- In the case of Azerbaijan, digital political activism has generated tensions between dominant national identity narratives and the more individualistic, cosmopolitan aspirations of the younger generation, producing a context-specific transformation shaped by the post-Soviet environment.
- Intergenerational differences play a significant role in the formation of political consciousness: while the younger generation adopts social media and cultural symbols as tools of political expression, older generations remain more closely aligned with traditional structures and media.
- Fields such as popular culture, the diaspora, and digital subcultures have become new spheres of postmodern political consciousness, in which artistic expression and everyday practices increasingly merge with political meaning and action.

YAZAR BEYANI / AUTHORS' DECLARATION:

Bu makale Araştırma ve Yayın Etiğine uygundur. Beyan edilecek herhangi bir çıkar çatışması yoktur. Araştırmanın ortaya konulmasında herhangi bir mali destek alınmamıştır. Makale yazım ve intihal/benzerlik açısından kontrol edilmiştir. Makale, “*en az iki dış hakem*” ve “*çift taraflı körleme*” yöntemi ile değerlendirilmiştir. Yazar, dergiye imzalı “*Telif Devir Formu*” belgesi göndermiştir. Mevcut çalışma için mevzuat gereği etik izni alınmaya ihtiyaç yoktur. Bu konuda yazar tarafından dergiye “*Etik İznine Gerek Olmadığına Dair Beyan Formu*” gönderilmiştir. Bu çalışmanın hazırlanması sırasında yazar yazma süreçlerinde yapay zekâ ve yapay zekâ destekli teknolojiler kullanmadığını beyan etmiştir. Yazar, bu çalışmanın yayınlanmadığını veya herhangi bir yayın kuruluşuna yayımlanmak üzere gönderilmediğini kabul etmektedir. Yazar, çalışmanın tüm bölümlerine ve aşamalarına tek başına katkıda bulunmuştur. / **This paper complies with Research and Publication Ethics, has no conflict of interest to declare, and has received no financial support. The article has been checked for spelling and plagiarism/similarity. The article was evaluated by "at least two external referees" and "double blinding" method. The author sent a signed "Copyright Transfer Form" to the journal. There is no need to obtain ethical permission for the current study as per the legislation. The "Declaration Form Regarding No Ethics Permission Required" was sent to the journal by the author on this subject. During the preparation of this work the author(s) did not use AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing processes. Author acknowledged that this study has not been published or submitted to any publication outlets for publication. The author contributed to all sections and stages of the study alone.**

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