

# The Role of Political Communication in Crisis Management<sup>1</sup>

\*Firas Kadhim Hassooni, \*\*Shubbar Hussein Jaafar Al-Naffakh

\**Directorate General of Education in Najaf/ Ministry of Education, Iraq.*

\*\**University of Kufa, Iraq*

DOI:10.37648/ijrssh.v13i02.010

Received: 09 March 2023; Accepted: 17 April 2023; Published: 21 April 2023

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## ABSTRACT

The importance of the research is the role of political communication in crisis management and how to manage it, the importance of political communication for the political system and society and the role played by different means of communication in times of crisis. Where the role of the means of communication appears greatly in times of crisis and plays different negative or positive roles, according to the nature of the crisis and the nature of the political system. As for the research problem, it lies in the fact that political communication is a relatively modern concept from a scientific point of view, and the different roles played by the means of communication in times of crisis, so the research tries to answer the following questions: (What is the concept of political communication? And what is the concept of crisis management?. What is the role of political communication in crisis management?) While the researchers assumed that the means of communication have a major role in crisis management. The analytical approach was adopted by the two researchers, to clarify the concept of political communication and crisis management and the role of political communication in crisis management.

**Keywords:** *Political communication: crisis management.*

## INTRODUCTION

Communication with its various means is of great importance and effective influence in crises and their management. At the same time, it is a tool of crisis management, as it represents one of the stages of crisis management. The interest in the communication and media aspects of crisis management emerged with the technological development and the accompanying societal change and the transition from the traditional situation to the modern one. In terms of urbanization, specialization, the social contract, the masses and the media, studies indicate the growing importance of communication in managing issues with the exposure of many countries and institutions to crises and the subsequent effects affecting the aspects of image, reputation and trust. The matter becomes even more complicated with the strong effects resulting from the intensive media coverage of crises, and the corresponding in some cases of a lack of positivity in dealing with the media presentation of the crisis, and the shortcomings in the communication and media discourse of the state and the organization, the communication strategies used in managing crises differ according to the cultural, economic and political contexts of the state, as well as the organizational culture of the institution. Many Arab and foreign studies have focused on monitoring the nature of managing issues and crises. The communication aspect, both preventive and curative, has received the attention of media and communication researchers. Political communication is considered one of the important topics that affect the political system and societies, so governments have sought to use these various means of communication to influence people and public opinion and to direct it towards a specific issue in order to obtain its support and assistance. Thanks to scientific and

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<sup>1</sup> *How to cite the article:*

Hassooni F.K., Al-Naffakh S.H. J., (April, 2023); The Role of Political Communication in Crisis Management, *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences and Humanities*, Apr-Jun 2023, Vol 13, Issue 2, 128-137, DOI: <http://doi.org/10.37648/ijrssh.v13i02.010>

technological progress in the means of communication, governments have taken advantage of this development to their advantage.

**Research Importance:**

The importance of the research on the topic, the role of political communication in crisis management, lies in the importance of political communication for the political system and society and the role played by the various means of communication in times of crisis, where the role of the means of communication appears greatly in times of crisis and plays different roles, negative or positive, depending on the nature of The crisis and the nature of the political system.

**Research Problem:**

The research problem lies in the fact that political communication is a relatively modern concept from a scientific point of view, and the different roles played by the means of communication in times of crisis, so the research tries to answer the following questions:

- What is the concept of political communication? What is the concept of crisis management?
- What is the role of political communication in crisis management?

**Research Hypothesis:**

The research stems from the hypothesis that political communication is a relatively recent concept and has a significant impact on society, and that the means of communication have a major role in crisis management.

**Research Methodology**

For the purpose of verifying the research hypothesis, the analytical approach was adopted to clarify the concept of political communication and crisis management and the role of political communication in crisis management.

**Research Structure**

The research was divided into two sections, as well as an introduction and a conclusion. The first topic dealt with the concept of political communication and crisis management, and in the second topic, the concept of crisis communication and its role in crisis management.

**THE FIRST TOPIC: POLITICAL COMMUNICATION AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT**

**Conceptual Framework:**

Political communication is considered a human, social and cultural phenomenon in which two parties interact, a sender and a recipient. Communication has been linked to the emergence and development of societies, but the interest in political communication did not begin until recently in the middle of the twentieth century. Political communication is one of the important issues that affect the political system and societies. Therefore, governments have sought to use these various means of communication to influence people and public opinion, and to direct them towards a specific issue in order to obtain their support, approval and support. Thanks to the scientific and technological progress in the means of communication, governments have taken advantage of this wide development to their advantage.

And the issue of crisis management is one of the important and modern topics also at the various internal, regional and global levels, due to the large number of crises that the world is going through at the present time and the need for a specialized scientific field to study the process of crisis management. This topic deals with the concept of political communication and crisis management in two terms as follows:

- 1- The first requirement: the concept of political communication.
- 2- The second requirement: the concept of crisis management.

**The first requirement: the concept of political communication.**

Political communication is a social human phenomenon that has been formed since the emergence of human gatherings and has been linked to the social and political formation of the individual and his interaction with his political environment inside and outside, his community. Political communication may be one of the influencing factors in the first social organizations in human history, and despite the fact that political communication was presented as a human behavior for the individual and the human group, the interest in political communication as a science has its fields and its interest did not begin until recently.

**First: the emergence of political communication:**

Philosophers and thinkers have touched in some of their writings on topics related to political communication, so Plato linked political behavior and the natural readiness of the individual according to the class to which he belongs. Likewise, Aristotle looked at man as a political being by nature, and he proceeded through his writings from the necessity of recognizing that the law in any good state must have the highest voice, and individuals communicate politically and socially. (Saad bin Saud, 2006, p.31)

The emergence of liberalism at the hands of John Milton in the sixteenth century AD is among the important steps in the stages of the development of political communication, as this theory emphasized freedom of expression, communication and political participation through various channels of communication. He rejected the monopoly of the political system in all its fields and forms.

And there are those who attribute the beginnings of political communication to the United States of America, when the Republicans decided to resort to an agency specialized in international relations in order to assume the nomination of General Eisenhower. For the first time, the party decided to allocate a special budget for political communication affairs. (Saad bin Saud, 2006, p.38)

The first attempts at theorizing political communication appeared in 1956, by studying the relationship between ruling political systems and the political behavior of individuals. After political thought separated the activity of power from the activity of individuals, the expansion of the concept of politics and the expansion of the functions of the modern state led to interest in public opinion and the emergence of the role of pressure groups and political parties that work to shape life and political relations. With the contemporary global changes, politics and communication have become more central and comprehensive in the life of modern man. (Shaima Belounis, 2015, p.13)

**Second: the concept of crisis management.**

First, it must be clarified that the concept of communication is a recent and controversial concept that did not find a single definition among theorists due to the overlapping of opinions and trends in its study. In its infancy, this concept reflected the great technical development that occurred in the use of sound and image technology in communication. (Jamal Al-Asadi, 2012, p. 61)

The word "communication" is derived from the Latin word "commence" meaning joint and general. Thus, communication includes participation and understanding about a certain idea, behavior, or direction. As for the Arabic language, it was defined by the singer of connection and the achievement of the goal, so the thing reached the thing, and reached it, ended with it, and reached it.

As for idiomatically, it is defined as the transfer of ideas, feelings, information and influences in addition to distribution and negotiation. (Jamal Al-Asadi, 2012, p. 62)

It is defined as the transmission of information, facts, ideas, opinions, and feelings as well. Communication is a vital human activity. It is the way in which ideas and information are transmitted between people within a specific social system that differs in terms of size and in terms of the content of the relationship involved in it.

Webster's Dictionary defines communication as, "an organism's characteristic response to any transmitter".

Sheri defines communication as, "the use of words, letters, or any similar means to share information about a topic or event" .As for the term political communication, its definitions have varied according to scholars and researchers. A distinction should be made between political communication as one of the forms of social communication, and political communication as a science with its theories. (Sahrawi Bin Shiha and others, 2010, p. 559:

Schudson defines political communication as, "any process of transmitting a message intended to influence the use of power or promote it in society".

John Meadow defines it as, "the way in which political conditions influence the formation of the content and quantities of communication, or the way in which the conditions of communication shape politics".(Yahya Al-Yahawi, 2013, p. 3)

All definitions of political communication revolve around considering it as every meaningful communication about the policy includes: (Nabila Boukhabza, 2014, p. 35)

1. All forms of communication undertaken by political actors to achieve certain goals.
2. Communication directed to politicians who are not involved in politics, such as voters, columnists, and others.
3. Communication dealing with politicians and their activities, including news reports and other forms of media coverage of politics.( Al-Bishr, Muhammad bin Saud, 2005, p. 20)

The meaning of political communication becomes clearer by referring to the general framework in which it takes place, which is the system of political communication, which consists of four basic elements:

**The first element:** the communicative aspects and activities of the political establishment.

**The second element:** the political aspects and activities of the media institution.

**The third element:** the attitudes of the masses towards political communication.

**The fourth element:** political aspects and activities related to political culture.

Among the previous definitions, it can be said that political communication is a group

The means that include the various means of communication used by governments to influence individuals in an issue or multiple issues.

### **The Second Requirement: The Concept of Crisis Management:**

Crisis management goes back to ancient times. Due to its association with human interactions with various issues and urgent and critical problems, many researchers believe that the term crises originally originated as a branch of public administration, and then it soon grew more clearly in the field of international relations.

Crisis is defined linguistically as distress and drought, and it is said that time is upon us: "Yazem Azem" which means it is intense and less good. And crisis is the strait and it is called on a road between two mountains "Mazim". (Ali bin Halul Al-Ruwaili, 2011, pg. 22)

Torrington defined it as a sudden, unexpected event in which causes are intertwined with results, and events follow very quickly, to increase the degree of uncertainty about developments and make the decision-maker extremely confused about any decision he takes and may lose his ability to control and act. (Al-Tamimi, Mahmoud Katim, 2016, pg. 122)

In order to reduce the effects and repercussions of the crisis, it must be managed, as the first beginnings of the emergence of the science of crisis management were linked as a positive term in the field of public administration, as it was practiced by states and public establishments to face emergency conditions and sudden disasters, then it was also practiced by private establishments as a method of management in the face of unexpected and successive events, to accomplish urgent tasks and solve an emergency impasse. The Cuban missile crisis in 1962 is considered the successful model for crisis management and the starting signal for the launch of the effort. I date the date of entry of this term into the dictionary of academic international relations towards rooting the principles of crisis management, when he launched "Robert McNamar" the US Secretary of Defense in the administration of the President "John Kennedy" his famous sentence (there is no longer room to talk about strategy, but only about crisis management). (Edward b. Porodex, Risk, 2008, p. 51)

The crisis management process can be defined as (a continuous administrative process that is concerned with predicting potential crises by sensing and monitoring the internal and external environmental variables that generate crises and mobilizing the available resources and capabilities to deal with the crisis with the least possible amount of damage as quickly as possible and at the lowest possible cost, while trying to organize the benefit resulting from it. crisis as possible). (Layady Al-Dhaouia, 2015, p. 31)

Al-Khudairi defines it as, (the science of managing the balances of power and monitoring its movements and directions. It is also the science of the future, the science of adapting to variables, the science of moving constants, and it is the science and art of activating resources and moving interactions and action forces in all humanitarian fields. (Hamid Abd Hamid al-Dulaimi, 2008, p. 70)

In order to complete the crisis management process, there must be an integrated approach that includes several stages to deal with the crisis, which is the stage of penetrating the crisis, the stage of concentration and establishing rules to deal with the elements of the crisis, the stage of controlling and controlling the crisis sites, and the stage of directing the crisis-making force to other areas or parties. (Saeed, Alseed, 2006, p. 34)

**The crisis management steps are:** (Ismail Abdel-Fattah, 2007, p. 33)

1. Crisis planning. It is an important part of strategic planning.
2. The need for an effective early warning system.
3. Finding and developing a specialized system that enables identifying and analyzing problems and finding the necessary solutions in cooperation and coordination with the competent authorities.
4. The need to establish a trained team for crisis management to work during the stages of the crisis so that the crisis is exploited and transformed into a positive opportunity.

## **THE SECOND TOPIC: THE ROLE OF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION IN CRISIS MANAGEMENT:**

Most researchers agree that communication plays a very important role in the different stages of the crisis, hence the theoretical and practical interest in the role of political communication in crisis management, and the optimal method of communication is determined to deal with the crisis in terms of its nature, quality and dimensions. Communication works to provide the public with information about the crisis and the political system as a whole. This topic deals with the role of political communication in crisis management, in two terms as follows:

1. The first requirement: the concept and stages of crisis communication
2. The second requirement: the role of crisis communication in crisis management

**The first requirement: the concept and stages of crisis communication**

The topic of crisis communication is one of the modern topics due to the modernity of crisis science and the modernity of communication science, and there are many attempts to study these topics, and crisis communication is related to the stages of crisis management, as it represents one of the stages of crisis management.

**First: the concept of crisis communication:**

The concept of crisis communication is embodied in the employment of communication as the intended social process that carries the meaning of influence and vulnerability to the comprehensive group of the basic elements of the communication process represented by the political system as a source of communication, comprehensive means of communication and messages whose content is the subject of the crisis that the political system or the state is going through and the reactions of the private actors The internal and external audiences, and the purpose of this process is to modify the behavior and attitudes of the public towards the crisis. (Hamel Mahdia, 2009, p. 36)

Crisis communication can be defined as "it is the one that includes all the activities and roles that are practiced during the various stages of the crisis, and within the framework of communication activities all types of communication are included, regardless of the messages and contents used in them". (Ibn Al-Arabi Yahya, 2014, p. 61)

Crisis communication is the process on pre-established plans for dealing with circumstances the crisis, as it includes technical and logical activities to provide the necessary communications to manage the crisis during its occurrence, as these plans prepared before the crisis occurs, can raise the ability of the political system to a high degree in the process of providing the required information to the masses during the occurrence of the crisis quickly and accurately, and thus this will reflect positively on the reputation and image of the political system in front of masses. (Ibn Al-Arabi Yahya, 2016, p. 5)

**Second: the stages of crisis communication:**

The crisis communication process goes through several stages, namely: (Al-Farouk Aliwa, 2000, p. 12):

- 1- Preparing the crisis communication:** The preparation of the crisis communication, although the latter is defined as an unexpected event. Also, the crisis is linked to the activities of the state and the political system, as it is sometimes not possible to know when the crisis appears, but activating the early warning system for crises would help at this stage.
- 2- Pre-crisis communication:** This stage is called danger communication, inter-communication, or ocean communication, as the French Scientific Research Council defines it as "an interactive process during which information or opinion is exchanged between individuals, groups, institutions, or decision-makers, and this includes multiple messages." On the nature of danger and disruption and opinions and reactions to information about the crisis.
- 3- During a crisis: Interactive communication:** Communication during a crisis is an important coordination factor that allows limiting the scope and depth of the crisis. Existing perceptions about the crisis and information provided about it can exacerbate it, as false alarms and rumors spread.
- 4- Coordination and social bond during a crisis:** Open communication: Communication during a crisis helps in coordinating efforts. It basically allows for organizing and coordinating the procedures and relationships referred to by the pre-crisis communication, which results in "collective construction of a common and acceptable concept of the crisis".
- 5- Post-crisis communication:** After the end of the media interest in the crisis, all those involved in the crisis begin to end the crisis. Some researchers, especially the experienced ones, pointed out the importance of

post-crisis communication, which is mainly related to the survival, stability and strength of the political system as it enters the healing process.

- 6- Evaluation and review phase:** Although it is appropriate to draw lessons from the crisis, the crisis communication, like any procedure that takes place within the framework of managing the crisis, must be the subject of evaluation, especially in crises of a security nature, where evaluation and organizational training in dealing with incidents allows for the improvement of the system. Security.

### **The second requirement: The role of crisis communication in crisis management**

Communication is of great importance and an effective influence in crises and their management, and at the same time it is one of the tools of crisis management. Communication aims to attract attention to the crisis, arouse interest in it, and formulate an appropriate awareness that establishes specific actions and behavior that help in dealing with the crisis and enables the decision-maker to deal effectively with it, contain its negative results, and achieve goals. Communication during a crisis performs dual tasks, namely: (Ibrahim Fawaz Al-Bajawi, 2005, pg. 75)

- 1- The first task is informational:** it aims to cover the crisis, follow its various developments, and publicize its results with the aim of formulating awareness within the country that includes public opinion, institutions, departments, and the competent executive agencies, with the aim of activating these authorities to confront the crisis forcefully and contain it.
- 2- The second task is directive:** it aims to secure the necessary support from countries and forces concerned with and interested in the crisis. Good communication is communication that is able to arouse the interest of all parties, whether the public or the political system.

### **First: Communication Strategies Used in Crisis Management:**

There are a set of strategies used in crisis management, namely: (Shawky Bouchareb, 2015, p. 70)

- 1- The strategy of reservation and secrecy:** This strategy is based on monitoring the attempts of external parties to obtain information, and it is a strategy that is not recommended to be used except in crises related to security and is highly confidential.
- 2- The strategy of waiting and not getting involved:** Here, communication experts advise the need to study the crisis in its various dimensions, with a thorough study in terms of the causes, effects and consequences of the crisis.
- 3- Response and defense strategy:** This strategy is based on preparing a defense that includes factual information.
- 4- Offensive defense strategy:** It is a strategy that uses the crisis as an opportunity to create a positive public opinion in support of the political system by working beyond the expectations of the masses.
- 5- Counter attack strategy:** In which the political system behaves in an offensive manner in the media, and it may use its right to resort to the judiciary or international courts.
- 6- Procrastination strategy.**
- 7- Criminal confession strategy.**
- 8- Crossroads strategy.**
- 9- Participation and responsibility strategy.**

**10- Temporary and non-temporary disappearance strategy.****11- Legal strategy.****Second: Crisis communication conditions**

**1- The necessary openness during crises:** It is essential that the public be aware of the crisis affecting them or affecting them the credibility of the political system must be provided as comprehensive information as possible, especially for those who were directly affected by the crisis. The element of openness includes the speed of access to the masses, the availability of information without blocking or conflicting, and the desire to respond to the requirements of the public. (Muhammad Abd al-Wahhab, 2001, p. 71)

**2- Determine the means and tools of communication with the public:** In order for the political system to ensure the success of the communication process in times of crisis, it must open and activate the means of communication and establish a strong relationship with the masses, as it guarantees their participation and loyalty at the time of the crisis and doubles communication with the public at this stage, and this requires, in fact, that it has devices and equipment capable of crisis management. (Hamel Mahdia, 2009, p. 101)

It is possible to distinguish in the means of communication with the public between two cases: (Adeeb Khaddour, 1999, p. 20)

**The first case: the political system targeting its masses through the media:** This leads to a kind of very complex interaction between the sender and the receiver, given that the media acts as a unique communication authority that plays the beginning of the role of the receiver in relation to the political system and the role of the sender in relation to the audience, as it publishes the message in question.

**The second case: the political system targets its masses directly.**

**official speaker:**

Among the means and tools for communicating with the public is the official spokesperson who is appointed in light of the crisis communication strategy after determining the time of communication.

**Third: The role of means of communication when crises occur:**

The role of crisis communication in crisis management is determined by the position of the means of communication when crises occur through the coverage of the means of communication and the news and information they provided through their directions in this regard, which in turn are affected by several aspects, including what is related to the size of the relationship between the means of communication and the institution concerned or the political system And the extent of the latter's interest in making contacts with the media to inform the public about the event well, what the political system is facing, and what it achieves in terms of successes and developments at the level of crisis management. The means of communication are also affected by the extent to which the political system provides them with information about the crisis, as well as the extent to which they face pressures and influences.

**The role of the means of communication in the event of a crisis is determined by the following:** (Muhammad Hamdan Al-Masalaha, 2002, p. 37)

- 1- The mediating role played by the means of communication, especially with regard to accomplishing the following tasks, providing information, explaining the importance and significance of events, building social harmony and relieving stress and anxiety.
- 2- There are those who believe that the crisis leads to supporting the role of means of communication, especially with regard to building reconciliation and reducing tension. And there are those who believe that the circumstances of the crisis and the imposed interventions lead to limiting the role of communication.

- 3- The crisis attracts the attention of the means of communication, but it also, in return, attracts the interest of the public opinion in the means of communication, and this explains the fact that the circumstances of the crisis are always characterized by the intensive use of the means of communication.

The choice of these means must be appropriate to the type and nature of the audience, and thus the crisis communication leads us to determine the source of the communication and who is the audience that has the priority right of communication at the time of the crisis and thus the use of the most effective means.

The means and communication channels are represented in holding conferences, preparing press thanks, conducting appetizers, advertisements, visual news bulletins, and correspondence with the public, as well as the Internet, which provides the possibility of exchanging knowledge of the best solutions to deal with the crisis, in addition to the possibility of following up the events of the crisis due to its rapid ability to disseminate information.

Modern means of communication also help to know the direction of public opinion and help it to issue information that matches the general course of public opinion trends. It also shows the importance of the Internet as one of the means of communication when crises occur outside the country, as it helps to speed up the arrival of information with the necessary accuracy and clarity.(Hamel Mahdia, 2009, p. 102)

In times of crisis, the control of governments or the relevant authorities on the sources of information increases, and therefore the problem of accessing these sources raises a controversial issue between politicians and those in charge of the means of communication. And in the midst of the frantic competition between the means of communication in order to follow up the events of the crisis, they fall into the trap of political propaganda.

## CONCLUSION:

Communication is of great importance and effective influence in crises and their management. At the same time, it is a tool of crisis management. Communication aims to attract attention to the crisis, arouse interest in it, and formulate an appropriate awareness that establishes specific actions and behavior that helps in dealing with the crisis and enables the decision-maker to deal effectively with it, surround its negative results, and achieve goals. Through the research, the following conclusions were reached:

- 1- Political communication is considered a human, social and cultural phenomenon in which two parties interact, a sender and a recipient. Communication has been linked to the emergence and development of societies, but the interest in political communication did not begin until recently in the middle of the twentieth century.
- 2- The beginnings of political communication go back to the United States of America, when the Republicans decided to turn to an agency specialized in international relations in order to take over the nomination of General Eisenhower. For the first time, the party decided to allocate a special budget for political communication affairs.
- 3- Most researchers agree that communication plays a very important role in the different stages of the crisis, hence the theoretical and practical interest in the role of political communication in crisis management, and the optimal method of communication is determined to deal with the crisis in terms of its nature, quality and dimensions. Communication works to provide the public with information about the crisis and the political system as a whole.
- 4- Crisis communication is the process that is based on pre-established plans in order to deal with the circumstances of the crisis, as it includes technical and logical activities to provide the necessary communications to manage the crisis during its occurrence, as these plans, prepared before the occurrence of the crisis, can raise the ability of the political system to a high degree in the process of providing information Required for the masses during a crisis quickly and accurately.
- 5- The crisis communication process goes through several stages, including preparation for crisis communication, pre-crisis communication, and during the crisis, interactive communication, coordination,

and social bond during the crisis, open communication, post-crisis communication, and the evaluation and review phase.

- 6- Modern means of communication help to know the direction of public opinion and help it to issue information that agrees with the general course of public opinion trends. It also shows the importance of the Internet as one of the means of communication when crises occur outside the country, as it helps to speed up the arrival of information with the necessary accuracy and clarity.

**Financial support and sponsorship:** Nil

**Conflict of Interest:** None

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