

Platform Neutrality—A Solution for the Social Media War?

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Abstract: Neutrality is a concept applied by states during times of war. The example of Swiss Neutrality has been most prominent among states, implementing a concept that also allows long-lasting neutrality practice during times of peace.

While the future of state neutrality in cyberspace remains open, its example provides inspiration for the ongoing development of the relationship between social media platforms (or large technology companies in general) and the state. This paper contextualises the work on platform neutrality on the background of state neutrality and explores its suitability for large technology companies. Furthermore, this paper outlines how concepts from state neutrality can be applied for technology companies operating in a global context and reflects on the benefit of such principles based on most recent developments in social media self-regulation during the coronavirus pandemic, the *Black Lives Matter* movement, and the US elections.

Keywords: Platform Neutrality, Social Media, Facebook, Twitter, State Neutrality, Fifth Estate, International Relations Theory, Coronavirus, Misinformation, Freedom of Speech, Digital Human Rights, Online Censorship

1. Introduction

The global importance of social media and technology platforms has become more apparent than ever during the year 2020. On three occasions social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, played their part in managing information and serving as a discussion forum of discussion: first, the emergence of the Coronavirus pandemic has become a major element of discussion throughout 2020. Second, the *Black Lives Matter* movement has led to a broad and global discussion about racism and inclusion, which has also been led through platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Finally, the elections in the US in November 2020 have received significant attention on social media platforms, including the claims of election fraud following the election.

In particular during times of “*lockdown*”, such platforms have become tremendously important as a means for accessing news, communicating with governmental and other institutions and for political discussion. These platforms have been described as the *fifth estate* of power in liberal democracies (Dutton 2020). Due to negative experiences with “hate speech” and misleading or contradicting information, requests for censorship or stricter control of online platforms have arisen. However, the nature of cyberspace is inherently global and challenging for regulation. Affected companies are subject to a specific jurisdiction—in many cases the US—but provide services globally. The inherent value of these platforms is that they are available globally and that they virtually bring together users and customers from different countries. Users share content, generate and consume information, and participate in discussions or use other services offered by the platform providers. Content is generated by platform “participants”. Creating a strict regime of regulation with many restrictions carried out on a national level would breach the global character that makes these platforms unique. Some approaches have been made to overcome clear cases of criminal activities, since these usually share the consensus and thus support of a sufficient number of countries. However, regulating content globally beyond such clear cases is a major challenge. Platforms such as Facebook or Twitter have initiated a regime of self-regulation, in order to address some problems. These platforms offer a forum for global discussion with impact on national politics and democratic procedures; how should these platforms relate to the state and how should they be controlled while ensuring their global character is not nationally compartmentalised? It has been argued that these platforms should be considered an additional actor in the realist global system of states of international relations (Kello, 2017).

This paper outlines an approach towards the relation between states, as the main actors of the international community, and globally operating social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter. It introduces the novel concept of *platform neutrality*, which extends the current economically-focussed definition of the term. The concept of platform neutrality is set into relation to state neutrality, in order to provide a historic foundation on a similar concept for states.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: Section 2 introduces the concept of state neutrality. Thereafter, the current economically focussed definition of the term platform neutrality is outlined in Section

3. Section 4 analyses some cases of developments on social media platforms during 2020 and how social media platforms have responded to them. Finally, Section 5 introduces the conceptualisation of platform neutrality and Section 6 draws conclusions and reflects on future work.

2. An Inspiration: State Neutrality

State neutrality is a concept known in conventional international politics. Its historic tradition and potential for cyberspace has been discussed by Stolz (2019) and the respective conceptualisation is shown in Figure 1. The most prominent example of a permanently neutral country is Switzerland. Relative neutrality is defined in international law (Spring, 2019) and its main aim is to ensure the rights and duties of neutral countries with respect to specific conflicts, in order to ensure that third parties are not drawn into a conflict. Permanent neutrality, however, extends beyond the definition of relative neutrality in international law. It relates to a concept of permanent non-alliance and neutrality towards any potential future conflict.

The functions in Figure 1 show additional functions of permanent neutrality. While remaining independent from a third-party conflict might be the initial motivation for a policy of permanent neutrality, a permanently neutral country also needs to ensure that the global community has an interest in its neutrality. This ensures the neutral status is respected and defended by a global consensus. The bottom three functions in Figure 1 determine benefits for a neutral country, while the top two functions determine the external benefits.

Integration enables a country to maintain its internal cohesion. External conflicts might lead different groups within a country to work against one another, potentially destabilising it. Neutrality ensures that the effects remain limited. *Independence* refers to a country's ability to act independently from pressures present in alliances or other international interest groups that might restrict the future scope of action. The aspect of *free trade* is related to independence; it has an economic focus. The external party's interest in a country's neutrality policy is reflected by the function of a *balance of power*. Foreign powers may have an interest in some territory (or institution) remaining neutral in support of a balance of power, for example due to a country's geopolitical location that would upset this balance if the country became part of a specific block. *Good services*, finally, states that a neutral country should provide services it can provide credibly only due to its neutrality; it may provide a forum or act as a mediator for other countries, for example.

These factors may be essential for the consideration of the future role of global social media platforms and the companies that run them. While the specific factors might differ in the case of globally operating Internet platforms, the underlying motivations serve as an important inspiration for the concept of platform neutrality. The dimensions that are affected by the functions may differ from those of states: social media platforms, for example, have a limited impact on territorial aspects in a conventional sense. Time will also be relevant for platform neutrality, in the sense that their neutrality also has to be based on a long-termed, or permanent, foundation. While the terms of war or peace might be less applicable for social media platforms, a similar dimension of societal tensions or political disputes might be relevant for platform neutrality. A social media platform provider will also need to balance their own interests to the general interest of the global community. This does not only refer to the interests of states but also global principles of human rights or protection of individuals ("civilians").

3. Current Approaches to the Term of Platform Neutrality

Section 1 outlined the growing importance of social media platforms based on work by Dutton (2020) and Kello (2017). Section 2 explained the concept of state neutrality. The idea of technological neutrality is not

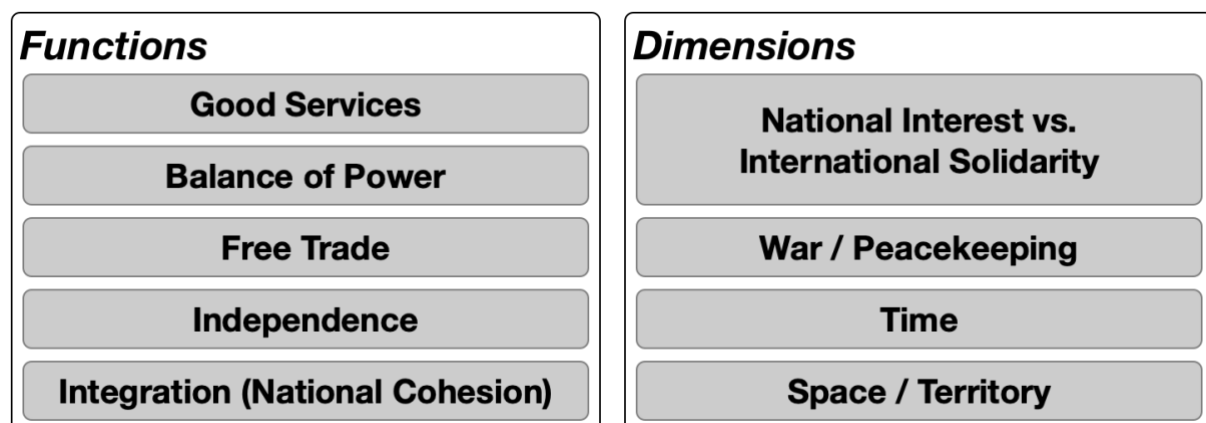


Figure 1: Functions and Dimensions of State Neutrality (Stolz, 2019).

new. The term of net neutrality has been introduced by Wu (2003) with a particular focus on the neutrality of Internet Service Providers (ISPs), in relation to the Internet traffic they route for users and content providers. Net neutrality bears an economic focus; ISPs should not favour traffic by specific content providers at the cost of other content providers and their users, in order to enable a free market of content. Furthermore, they should not restrict the use of their networks to specific application layer protocols, such as http(s) (for web browsers), streaming protocols (for services such as Netflix), etc. Rather, they should allow broad use of the Internet for all sorts of applications layer protocols.

Platform neutrality has also been discussed under an economical focus (Conseil National Numérique, 2014): Platform Service Providers (PSPs), such as Google, Facebook, or Twitter, should remain economically neutral towards services they provide. Originally, some PSPs built services and subsequently favoured their own appliances running on these services, generating a distortion of free market rules.

Gao and Yang (2015) relate the term of platform neutrality to net neutrality. Krämer and Schnurr (2018) specifically focus on how the EU should regulate the economic neutrality of PSPs. The latter argue that economic platform neutrality should not be regulated by imposing conditions of neutrality but rather by means of greater transparency in order to ensure a fair free market.

The introduced concepts in the literature of net and platform neutrality both argue with fairness of the free market and effectivity of the services offered. While this focus on economic fairness ensures a prosperous development of markets, it neglects an important aspect that is imminent to the social nature of platform services: the platforms provide a global forum for users and institutions. Not only should the access to services (such as advertisements) be fair for customers and users; the forum that allows discussion and promotion of opinions should be fair for all users. Such a call for fairness for the global forum provided by PSPs is underlined by claims that PSPs offer what is part of the *fifth estate* of liberal democracy (Dutton, 2020) and are a new non-state actor that has to be considered in addition to the international system of states of global conflict and cooperation (Kello, 2017).

4. Social Media Platform Developments during 2020

As outlined, political and social aspects have barely been considered under the term *platform neutrality*. This section discusses three cases arisen in 2020 that have further substantiated the underlying problems of regulation of global platforms. This is of particular relevance for liberal democracies, which rely on the ancient idea of a forum for free discussion. While such fora are conventionally controlled by means of national laws and enforced by the state, the global nature of online platforms introduces problems.

4.1 Misinformation during the Coronavirus Pandemic

The emergence of the Coronavirus pandemic has led to “lockdowns” in Europe and the US from March 2020 onwards. These lockdowns have led to an increase of people working from home and therefore also relying more on online platforms for work and social interaction. Social media platforms have received increased attention as a consequence due to online discussions on topics connected with the pandemic. The spread of false information through Facebook has been subsequently declared a “*major threat to public health*” (AVAAZ, 2020). Sites spreading misinformation have been found to receive four times more attention than the information spread by trustworthy sources, such as the *World Health Organisation* (WHO) (Stauffacher, 2020), and Facebook’s algorithms have been found to favour misinformation. While Facebook has claimed to take action by means of warnings attached to potential misinformation campaigns, this has been found to be ineffective as it only flagged 16% of misinformation (Stauffacher, 2020). This was contradictive to attempts of Facebook and other social media platforms of marketing themselves as supporters for tackling the global pandemic earlier in the year (Stauffacher, 2020b). It has been pointed out, however, that the distinction between misinformation handling and censorship is delicate (Stauffacher, 2020b), and indeed PSPs have been criticised to restrict freedom of speech in an illegitimate way, even if this happened accidentally. For example, Twitter had blocked links to the Swiss website *corona-data.ch*, even though the website’s contents were legitimate and trustworthy. Such unintended consequences fuelled conspiracy theories about the pandemic. Further efforts by social media companies included the launch of information centres that should provide unbiased facts (Hatmaker, 2020). Furthermore, a ban on specific ads, e.g., facemasks, was announced. Due to problematic posts and statements from politicians, social media platforms further started removing posts of publicly elected representatives, such as the Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro (Their, 2020). This first ever deletion of posts on the basis of misinformation was an important precedent. Later in the year, a similar precedent occurred with the first ever deletion of a post by the US president, Donald Trump, also in

connection with a post classified as misinformation (Kormann, 2020). Facebook justified deletions by stating that they spread misinformation and infringed the platform's guidelines. Youtube also took steps in connection with the pandemic to avoid the spread of misinformation: it introduced fact-check panels under videos relating to specific search terms (Vincent, 2020). Twitter took a more radical approach by deleting accounts that spread conspiracy theories (Bitz, 2020). These examples emphasise the importance of a thorough discussion to prevent unintended censorship.

4.2 Reactions to the Black Lives Matter Movement

The second case example covers the *Black Lives Matter* (BLM) movement that gained public attention around May 2020, following the death of George Floyd. The case was heavily discussed on social media, fuelled by measures induced on society following the spread of coronavirus and the resulting increased use of the Internet for communication. The movement also triggered a discussion on discriminatory posts, hate speech, and verbal violence against minorities or suppressed groups on social media platforms (SZ.de, 2020). Social media platforms first emphasised the aspect of free speech, but later experienced pressure from the public, their customers (i.e., organisations that pay for advertisements), and their own employees. Reddit banned accounts spreading hate speech, an action that has been labelled as "deplatforming", followed by Twitter, Youtube, and Tiktok (Hurtz, 2020). Facebook, which had previously taken a less restrictive approach, declared that it would change its guidelines, following protests of its employees and threats from customers to withdraw their advertisements from the platform (Hurtz, 2020b). Twitter decided that it would delete posts or, in case they were against Twitter's guidelines but from an author of public interest, such as the US president, hide them behind a warning message. The delicacy of the action taken by the PSPs is underlined by some important considerations: The tension between the freedom of speech versus action taken against the spread of misinformation (often labelled as "censorship" by its contestants) has already been explained in the example of coronavirus. The questions raised under the pressure of the BLM movement underline similar problems: While presumably the general goal of banning hate speech and verbal violence is widely shared, the line between what is and is not allowed to be posted is difficult to define and risks being subject to opinion bias or temporary waves, which could result in unfair discrimination of non-mainstream opinions in their right to free speech. The sequence of events with respect to regulation of posts on the BLM movement illustrates this problem: instead of basing its activities on general rules that apply equally to all actors, Facebook only responded to criticism emerging from one opinion group, and gave way to pressure from employees and financial pressure from its advertisement customers. While it did resist governmental pressure, and so did Twitter when experiencing far greater pressure as a response to its ban of a post by the US president, a response to political pressures from opinion groups or financial pressures from advertisement customers does not yield an approach towards restricting verbal violence or hate speech that is applied equally to all users. Rather, it seems that Facebook only responded to public pressure. Claims have been made that the public pressure Facebook responded to yielded a restrictive situation, in which harmless posts were banned (SZ.de, 2020b). This practice might favour a specific opinion and gives way to claims of censorship and fuels conspiracy theories on information control.

4.3 The US Presidential Campaign

The third case, the US election campaign, has to be considered on the background of the BLM movement already described, since it also became a topic in the US elections. The already discussed warning message displayed on top of one of the US presidents' tweets resulted in a power battle between the US president and Twitter: The US president announced he would sign a decree in order to change the 1996 Communication Decency Act that disengages Internet platforms from any responsibility for the content generated by their users. It currently provides the basis for the business model of PSPs but, following the plans of the US president, should be changed to ensure freedom of speech and prevent any "censorship" by the PSPs "against conservative" opinions (Langer, 2020). However, the decree did not materialise. Nevertheless, the intervention of a political actor, the US president, in operational decisions of the platforms underlines their importance in the political process of Western countries and particularly the US. The case of the US elections is particularly interesting, since large PSPs are mostly subject to US jurisdiction. Therefore, the US is the one country in the world with the greatest influence on PSPs' practices, potentially being able to restrict or even shut down PSPs located in the US. As such, the US is a country that can influence PSPs' operation globally by means of national regulation, while other countries struggle to effectively regulate PSPs since they are beyond their direct jurisdiction. There are mechanisms employed by states, particularly by some European states or also the EU, that influence PSPs and that companies adhere to in order to avoid difficulties. Nevertheless, states have

limited scope in pressuring PSPs to comply with their regulations when acting on their own. The case of the US illustrates why PSPs might have to remain neutral from a state, in order to provide a political forum that is not subject to restrictions by a government; however, the emergence of hate speech and verbal violence also underlines that some sort of regulation is required nevertheless. PSPs have further underlined their will to remain neutral from state content providers by flagging accounts that are connected to states or politicians. For example, Twitter has started to flag accounts of state-influenced or state-owned media, such as specific Chinese or Russian content providers, in order to ensure transparency of content provision (NZZ.ch, 2020b and SZ.de 2020d).

4.4 Mitigation Mechanisms

The current subsection discusses some mitigation mechanisms on the background of the three cases illuminated in the previous subsections. First, Facebook explained that it will address problems of political advertisements early in 2020: Whoever would want to place such advertisements would need to undergo an additional registration and verification mechanism (Muth, 2020). These measures were aimed at increasing transparency by introducing an advertisement archive. They were inspired by experiences from previous elections and popular votes, such as the 2016 US presidential election, the Brexit popular vote in the UK, or the Irish referendum on abortion. The measures were aimed both at the US election and the EU elections in May 2020. One main focus was to prevent so-called *Dark Ads*, which are only displayed to very specific user groups and, therefore, bear the potential for misinformation while remaining hidden from broader public attention and scrutiny. The advertisement archive would make it possible for the public to trace political advertisements and access information such as the issuer's identity, the amount paid, and who an advertisement was targeted for. This new practice is in-line with PSPs acting as a global forum by increasing transparency and accountability, elements that are essential in the non-digital political discussion in liberal democracies. However, they raise important questions: is it sufficient that PSPs self-regulate? Who determines how far this regulation goes? Is there a need for democratically or otherwise legitimated control of measures are taken?

While the discussed transparency and accountability mechanism for political advertisements inherently implies Facebook sees itself as a political forum of high relevance, Facebook later announced a ban for political advertisements during the week preceding the election date in the US (Facebook, 2020). Facebook (2020) also defined clear (mis)information policies applied to statements on COVID-19 risks during the election, posts that might attempt to delegitimise the election's outcome, or premature claims of victory. These measures were probably inspired by concerns on the potential unrest such misinformation could cause in the political process. Similar steps would conventionally be considered within a state's legal code concerning the election process. However, in this case, the actions taken were imposed on a purely self-regulatory basis. Due to the turbulences around the election result in the US, Facebook announced to extend the ban on political advertisements and its other sanctions in order to avoid *confusion* during the process of the handover of power (Kamp, 2020 and Hatmaker, 2020b). The importance of these measures in terms of political stability and avoidance of the spread of misinformation and conspiracy theories has been emphasised by Kamp (2020). The action taken, however, did not stand under any particular national legislation. The cascade of events and actions outlined emphasises the claim of PSPs acting as a fifth estate (Dutton, 2020) by means of providing globally operating political and social forum. They also reveal the potential dependence on the good-will of PSP's when they are beyond a state's jurisdiction. The "power struggle" between PSPs and the US president on the handling of questionable posts made by the latter (SZ.de, 2020c) emphasise these aspects, while also underlining the need for PSPs to be somewhat independent from governmental influence.

A further attempt to resolve the regulation problem has been taken by the US lawmakers in November 2020: the heads of PSPs, such as Facebook and Twitter, had to answer questions during a hearing in the US Senate. Both Mr Zuckerberg (Facebook) and Mr Dorsey (Twitter) emphasised that a reform to legal mechanisms of content moderation might be required. They further stated that they implement different measures for content moderation (Isaac, and Browning, 2020). Twitter was more restrictive, banning accounts more quickly than Facebook. The tension between verifying information in order to avoid misinformation and providing a free and open forum under the principle of freedom of speech is handled differently; it is not supported by any national legislation. PSPs have come to the conclusion that some moderation is necessary on the background of the events outlined earlier (NZZ.ch, 2020).

While the self-regulatory steps outlined might be seen as a mitigation for the problems, their success is questionable. Reports have shown that previously banned accounts moved from the most popular PSPs to other, less restrictive PSPs: a platform called *Parler* specifically marketed itself as being less restrictive towards content and attracts mainly right-wing and conservative users and content providers (Their, 2020). Parler

claims to offer “real” freedom of speech while rejecting “techno-fascism” (Their 2020). However, this practice of Parler also gave room to misinformation and conspiracy theories, such as posts about an alleged “plandemic” being the explanation around the coronavirus pandemic. Parler’s community guidelines leave scope for interpretation and give precedence to the principle of freedom of speech in case review volunteers disagree. Such a loose enforcement of guidelines bears its problems. The importance of some kind of regulation is underlined by the case of verbal violence and misinformation against Kamala Harris: Facebook had to remove posts about US vice-president-elect Kamala Harris that were verbally violent. Facebook took the approach of deleting the posts, while not banning the groups that had allowed the spread of such posts (Clayton, 2020). The emphasis lies on moderating the content depending on specific criteria, while not generally banning users or groups from using a platform. As such, Facebook acknowledges the necessity and openness of its role as a global forum, but restricts some of the content in case it is too violent or breaches the limits of its hate speech definition.

Facebook has introduced a further mechanism to ensure the political independence of its content moderation decisions, which might be a first step towards implementing political platform neutrality: the *Facebook Oversight Board* provides users with an option for appeal of content moderation decisions (Levy, 2020). It has been called “Facebook’s Supreme Court” (Levy, 2020), providing para-state structures in terms of a judiciary for content moderation. Mark Zuckerberg has claimed “*Facebook should not make so many important decisions about free expression and safety on our own*” and Facebook further admits that “*with our size comes a great deal of responsibility*” (Clegg, 2020). The board’s members are funded by means of a separate *Oversight Board Trust*, which ensures the members’ financial independence from Facebook (Clegg, 2020). The board’s structure further prevents a national or cultural bias by involving members from more than 27 countries, speaking more than 29 languages (Clegg, 2020).

An example from the EU shows how transnational collaboration further enhances self-regulation: Meta Beisel and Kolb (2020) outline the reaction of the EU Commission’s Vice-President, Věra Jourová, upon identifying foreign powers, such as Russia and China, as being responsible for specific misinformation campaigns: the EU Commission now asks PSPs to provide a detailed monthly report, which outlines their self-regulatory activities. This ensures transparency and freedom of speech. Notably, even the Chinese-owned video platform Tiktok participates in this voluntary process. The EU’s initiative provides an interesting example of transnational control, with an emphasis on transparent self-regulation, while providing little actual regulation; the EU takes an approach of non-regulation through transparency and potential of negative consequences in case the mitigation mechanisms are insufficient, i.e. it expects the PSPs to regulate themselves and provide detailed documentation about the mechanisms of self-regulation. Due to the EU’s structure, this oversight is democratically legitimized while omitting direct governmental or regulatory influence.

5. Conceptualisation of Political and Social Platform Neutrality

In this section, the concept of platform neutrality is formalised. PSPs provide global forums, due to the inherently global character of cyberspace (Stolz, 2020). Section 4 explained the relevance of PSPs for the functioning of political and societal discussion: PSPs have an impact on national politics while being global in nature. Various cases of problems and mitigation mechanisms have been discussed. This paper suggests that PSPs should be viewed as relevant actors in the global arena of international politics, as has been suggested by Kello (2017). Their role in influencing developments within states but also between states is plausible on the background of the cases discussed. PSPs offer a space where people can interconnect, generate and share

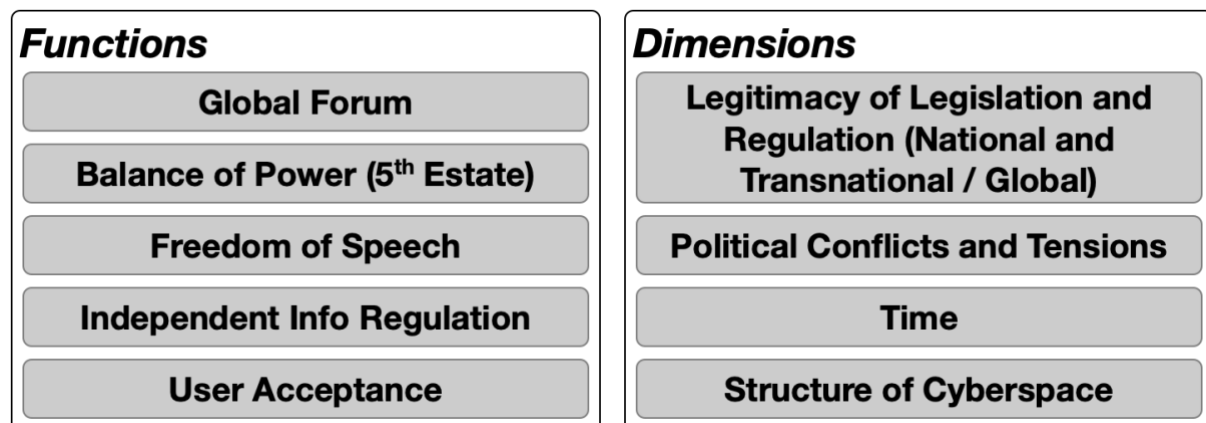


Figure 2: Functions and Dimensions of Platform Neutrality.

information, and instantly respond to content from other users in a public or semi-public manner.

The concept of *political* and *social* platform neutrality is inspired by state neutrality. PSPs, functioning as global actors, should be neutral from specific countries and political or social groups. This neutrality fulfils specific functions, which are related to problems discussed in Section 4 and are shown in Figure 2. *User Acceptance* considers the phenomenon of users switching to other platforms due to restrictions or restrictive practice. Neutrality of platforms should enable PSPs to remain trusted and, thus, accepted by their users while also maintaining a sufficient regime of information control, as contained in the function of *Independent Info Regulation*. This function includes effective measures against misinformation and verbal violence or hate speech that are unbiased and adhere to specific principles, which are applied equally and independently from any mainstream opinions or pressures from specific groups. Platform neutrality ensures that this regulation happens independently from governmental pressure or restrictive legal regimes present in some jurisdictions. Due to this independence from governmental or other pressures, platform neutrality further enables *Freedom of Speech*. A further function of platform neutrality is that of a *fifth estate* (Dutton, 2020), both within a country as well as in the global community; therefore, platform neutrality enables a balancing of powers both on a national and global level by means of providing a global forum. Neutrality further contributes to the success of these forums being adopted widely or even globally, which contributes a public good to the global community. Furthermore, the aspect of a global forum that is independent from a specific state jurisdiction increases credibility and trust in PSPs; e.g., foreign governments would not need to fear influence by the U.S. government when users access Facebook's services.

The dimensions relevant for Platform Neutrality are also listed in Figure 2. Platforms certainly depend on the structure of cyberspace; some countries, such as China, already contribute to a development that has been labelled as "splinternet", by means of restricting many global services. As such, platforms and their neutrality with respect to politics and countries will depend on the further developments of the global structure of cyberspace. Furthermore, the concept of Platform Neutrality will gradually develop over time, as has already been the case with the self-regulation of PSPs outlined in Section 4. Platform neutrality will need to prove itself as an effective instrument for the provision of a (global) forum in the times of increased political tensions; this development has so far been positive and into the direction of platform neutrality, which indicates that platform neutrality is indeed beneficial for the PSPs as well as for democratic societies. Finally, the question of legitimacy of any measures decided by PSPs is yet open; platform neutrality will depend on the trustworthiness of the measures taken by platforms in order to self-regulate. As such, there needs to be some source of legitimacy for the measures taken by platforms. The Facebook Oversight Board provides an example for establishing legitimacy of decisions: it is drawn from the expertise, independence, and diversity of its members. In general, legitimacy might be drawn from the effectivity of measures already experienced (e.g., experiences made with the Facebook Oversight Board's functioning), while some legitimacy might have to be further granted by means of establishing specific transnational or even international structures. The example of the EU's approach towards overseeing self-regulation of platforms is democratically legitimised due to the EU's democratic structure. A similar concept of oversight and potential minimal regulation of the independence of PSPs from states might also be implemented by international bodies, such as the UN. A collaborative and multilateral effort would presumably provide a high level of legitimacy not only for the self-regulatory measures of PSPs but also for the neutrality of PSPs; even in case a country disagrees with the practice of a PSP, it would be difficult to challenge its neutrality when the PSP is under global oversight and independent from a single country's direct influence.

6. Conclusion

This paper introduced the concept Platform Neutrality for PSPs due to their global operation and their international importance. While it relies on cases and developments in the real world and is inspired by the concept of state neutrality that has been effectively implemented over almost two centuries, further research required to establish the feasibility and effectivity of the concept. Some aspects of the concept are already being implemented currently by PSPs; other aspects, such as the idea of legitimacy through transnational or international bodies, require further investigation. Moreover, the concept needs to be discussed more broadly, including major PSPs and representatives of transnational and international organisations, in order to scrutinise current definitions and work towards a broad adoption of the model.

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