THE IMPACT OF THE DIGITALIZATION PROCESS ON DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: IN THE EXAMPLE OF THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN*

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Abstract. The integration of digital technologies in the field public and political sphere has become one of the important tendencies in global practice. The use of digital technologies in the political process creates an opportunity to reduce document turnover within the apparatus and simplifies the system of the state apparatus. Such concepts as automation of labor, robotics, artificial intelligence, large databases of data, 3D printing, blockchain, freedom of speech in the digital world not only give a new impetus to the national economic progress but also increase its innovative potential. The implementation of digital technologies in public administration is not just a transition of the process into "remote form", but also it is about digital management of large data, the receipt of large volumes of information, or so-called "digital migration".

In Kazakhstan, think tanks and politicians in the last two decades have been studying and actively discussing the integration of digital technologies and innovations in the field of public administration. In this article, the author at first makes extensive scientific literature on the studies of the impact of the process of digitization on political institutions and public administration, as well as identifies the main scientific paradigms within the sphere. Second, the authors analyze the impact of the digitization process on the functioning of public and political institutions, as well as the role of the digitization process in the formation of democratic institutions. Finally, the authors study the impact of the digitalization process on the political institutions in the case of Kazakhstan.

Key words: political institutions, e-government, digitalization, democratic values, civil society.

Introduction

In modern times, the process of digitalization covers all spheres of social institutions starting from political-economical spheres to science and culture. The rapid development of digital technologies changing the traditional, established form of relations between political institutions and the people. In the twentieth century, humanity has seen the process of globalization with economic turnover and movement of goods among countries. Consequently, in the XXI century, we are witnessing the process of globalization which leads to a large-scale circulation of values and information at a global scale. The concept of "digital globalization" covers not only the social and economic spheres of it but also initiates the system of public political governance and the formation of democratic political institutions. Digitization is the conversion of data or information from analog to digital or electronic form in general terms. The process of digital transformation is about the use of digital technologies, from artificial intelligence to digital media, electronic programs as a political instrument in the system of public administration. The digitization process is fraught with both opportunities and complexities. Various aspects of this phenomenon should be studied not only in terms of information technology but also in terms of the humanities as a social concept.

Methodology

The formation of digital technologies in the history of human development is a continuation of the centuries-old path of socio-economic development. The history of social and technological revolutions dates back to the Bronze and Stone Ages, and during the nineteenth century, it was followed by the Industrial Revolution and led to the formation of the information society. According to the United Nations, in 1980, 1% of all data was stored in digital form, while in 2012 the share of information in digital format reached 99% [1]. Accordingly, today every year the volume of digital information exceeds the period of formation of an entire civilization of a society based on information algorithms. The authors in this article use the method of systematic analysis. Systematic-retrospective approach analysis of the digitalization process and its impact on political institutions.

Digital Technologies as a Political Tool

The US presidential election in 2016, the Brexit-2016 referendum in Britain, the dispute between Facebook and Britannica over the use of bots in the US election in 2018, and other local and international cases prove the growing influence of digital technology in political processes. The Covid-19 pandemic was even a main reason to step towards accelerating the digital transformation in the public sector,

especially in public administration. It is leading to a process of the politicization of digital services. Thus, the digitization of bureaucratic procedures and the digitalization of a number of services provided to the population have gained new momentum and gained a new impetus in society as a whole. Over the past decade, numerous studies have been done on the impact of increased information flows and the availability of digital information flows on the active participation of citizens in political processes. For example, Tom Sibel, Isaac Sakolik, Bill Schmarzo, and many others have studied the impact of digital technologies on existing social institutions as a major research object. From a collective point of view, digital media has formed a common platform for uniting citizens for a common purpose. Apart from the political mobilization of digital media, their impact on political institutions and their political-ideological aspect still require extensive research.

The structure of the article consists of three main sections. At first, we examine the impact of the digitalization process on public administration and democratic political institutions in international practice on the example of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Second, the authors identify the impact of the digitalization process on the functioning of public and political institutions and analyze the role of the digitalization process in the formation of democracy. Third, analyze and summarize the impact of the digitalization process on political institutions in Kazakhstan. Digital media has become the basis for the consumption of information by individuals, not only as a means of subsistence but also as a key tool for implementing political reforms. Although the widespread use of the Internet in the 1970's as a social tool later in the XXI century were the main foundations to the concepts of "digital government", "digital civic activism" and began to be considered as the main object of research among scholars. Despite the low level of public trust in traditional sources of information, the traditional form of participation in political processes remains important. Digital technologies provide additional opportunities to express socio-political activity: citizens participate anonymously in online discussions and debates on digital platforms, trying to control the demands of public political institutions through digital platforms. Currently, the scientific community has a wide range of research on the impact of digitalization on socio-political processes, from the technical features of the digitalization process, the form of security, the impact on economic and social processes.

The study of the social aspect of the digitalization process combines the research of scientists as follows: Bennett, Segerberg [2], Boehler [3], Howard [4]. Therefore, in this paper, we will discuss only the existing scientific concepts on the impact of the digitalization process on the system of political governance and public administration. For the first time, the introduction of microchips in the 70s and 80s was studied as the basis for the formation of the "information society" [5]. Among scholars, there is a stream of contradictory concepts in the functioning of political institutions of digital technology and the scientific systematization of the

influence of democratic institutions. At first, the instrumentalist approach to the mobilization and transparency of digitalization in the public administration system. The following scholars belong to this group: Ambati, Vamshi, N. Balakrishnan [6], Auletta, Ken [7], Bowden, David and Lynn Robinson [8] and others. According to them, the process of digitization brings transparency and openness to the system of public administration. The other side is the conventionalist approach, which criticizes for the most part that digital technology ceases to function as an institution and makes a cyclical program. In this group: Bowden, David, and Lynn Robinson [8], Borgi, Maurizio [9], and others believe that the process of digitization leads to imbalances in political institutions and democratic governance, forming a «digital authoritarianism.»

According to the study by Well and Thomson there exists a correlation between digital media dissemination of political information and civic activism. The concepts of «e-government», «e-services», «e-democracy», «digital transformation» are widely used in the scientific literature to determine the impact of digital technologies on socio-political processes. The connection of the «digital» connection to the notions of the established, traditional political institution is considered in close connection with the notion of efficiency, transparency. These concepts were first introduced into scientific circulation in the works of the following scientists: Dyson J. [9], Eveny A. [10], Hales N.K. [11] and others. Digital technologies are directly changing the existing system of political institutions. In some cases, digital technology has become a "favorite tool of autocratic leaders," but in some cases, it has entered the public administration system through numerous manipulations in the dissemination of information, government remote monitoring of citizens, centralized collection of personal information, and so on. In order to be able to analyze the impact of digital transformation on democracy, first necessary to define the meaning and scope of the concept of democracy in political science. Although there are many philosophical and sociological definitions of democracy, still there is no common definition agreed upon in international law.

Democracy is usually seen as a system in which the people govern directly or through their elected representatives. Digital transformation as a whole process, in its various forms, directly and indirectly, impact all spheres of political life, from the economy to culture, from the participation of citizens in political processes to the object of policy. The system of democratic governance has undergone several changes and criticisms since its inception in antiquity. Today, there are two different thoughts about the impact of digital technology on the principles of liberal democracy. However, there is no consensus on the causes of the crisis and the role of digital technologies in it.

According to the study by Chatham House on "The Future of Democracy in Europe: The Evolution of Technology and Representation," the role of digital technology is not the main reason for the crisis of liberal democracy. On the

contrary, one of the reasons for the current crisis of democracy is the populist political orientation of authoritarian leaders [12]. However, according to the 2021 Freedom Index, published by the Freedom House Center, digital technologies have a significant impact on the activation of democratic institutions, unique, openness, transparency, inclusion, and accountability [13]. The rapid development of some technologies, such as artificial intelligence established the principle of digital "equality and restraint" between government institutions and civil society. Political literature has gone through several stages of the democratic participation of the population in political processes.

In international practice, scholars have divided the transformation of digital technology into a political tool into democratic, authoritarian forms of government. First, a number of Western-led states are laying the foundations for a «digital government» that prioritizes individual freedom of movement, liberal values, and the minimal role of government. In the practice of this group of countries, they have developed a model of «open, interactive, reliable and secure Internet» that prioritizes the intervention of digital technologies as a neutral and democratic platform. Second, a group of authoritarian countries, led by China, Russia, and Iran, have developed the concept of «digital autocracy» in political science through «digital mass surveillance» of citizens across the country using digital technologies to «protect information security» in the use of digital technology in public policy. Therefore, there is no reason to believe that the use of digital technologies in political activities will bring transparency and democratic values to the system. Because digital technology is a political tool, governance is directly linked to the system.
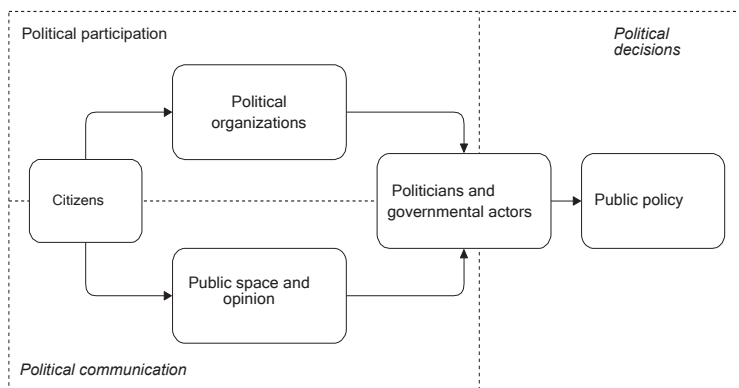
Digital Governance: Issues and Implications

Digital technologies are moving from a direct form of representation to a link between citizens and political power, creating openness, inclusiveness in public and political decision-making, and direct democratic participation from a representative form. Digital transformation is also affecting the political and civil society. New subjects of democracy emerged when some political parties resorted to micro-targeting in political campaigns and traditional actors adapted to new ways of propaganda and broadcasting. Private entities, in particular Internet intermediaries and social media platforms, are increasingly playing a central role in the public sphere as infrastructure providers, content creators, and distributors. Large technology companies act as gatekeepers in selecting and processing information to be shared on social platforms, directing it to a specific audience, and influencing public opinion, political debate, and ultimately election results.

In general, digital technology offers ways to improve the quality of democracy in terms of responsibility and accountability. Unless appropriate measures are taken, its impact on participation and coverage can be twofold: Internet access and

digital literacy will become important criteria for full participation in the democratic process. Digitalization can provide new channels for public administration to provide quality services. Since the 1950s, public administration has made significant efforts to modernize with the gradual introduction of digital technologies. Adoption of digital transformation also means contributing to cultural change in the work of civil servants. The increasing use of automated decision-making in the public sector raises a number of issues, including the risks of accountability, transparency, and discrimination. In the absence of appropriate security measures, the technology is more likely to cause systemic problems, in addition to ensuring high efficiency. To maximize the positive impact of digital technology, every state, regardless of the form of government and ideological basis, should consider digital technology not only as a tool but also as a value.

The common denominator of the scientific findings in the above-mentioned scientific literature is that digital technologies affect the system of political governance in three main aspects: political communication, political participation, and political decision-making. These three areas form the basis of democratic institutions in any system of public administration. Taking into account the model shown in Figure 1, we see the impact of digital technologies on all areas of democratic governance. We see the impact of digital technologies on political communication in the formation of public opinion, the growing role of communication between political institutions, leaders and civil society institutions. The influence of digital technologies on political participation creates a «direct democracy» in the political system and establishes a direct link between political decision-making institutions and citizens. In a democratic political system, each political decision of national importance is made with the direct consent of the electorate. In this context, through digital technologies, citizens are the direct basis for the formation of public opinion, and politically active citizens become the main object.

1 figure: System of functioning of democratic institutions. (Fung et al., 2013, 32)

In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, the digitalization of the public sector is gaining momentum. The Covid-19 pandemic was a test of the effectiveness of public administration in the use of digital technologies throughout the world. Indeed, the ability to rapidly digitize administrative processes and services has greatly contributed to the sustainability of public action by continuing the work of democratic institutions and providing public services. At the same time, digitalization is pushing democracy to new risks and changes, and public administration to systemic change.

In Kazakhstan, too, the coronavirus pandemic has led to a massive, short-term digitalization of public services. The government of Kazakhstan, like many other countries, took the first structural step in the development of this industry in 2017 with the adoption of the Digital Kazakhstan program [14]. The Digital Kazakhstan program is a strategic state program aimed at accelerating economic development, transition to the digital economy, and improving quality. The purpose of the program is to accelerate the development of the country's economy in the medium term and improve the quality of life through the use of digital technologies, as well as to facilitate the transition of Kazakhstan's economy to a radically new development trajectory in the long run. Kazakhstan ranks 65th in the 2005 UN e-Government Development Index (among 193 countries), and in 2020 it ranks 29th. According to the UN report, Kazakhstan ranks 7th among Asian countries and 1st in Central Asia [15].

Digitalization in Kazakhstan: a Case Study

For the first time in 2004, the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, proposed the idea of creating "e-government", and the use of digital technologies in the civil service. It was the first initiative among Central Asian countries in 2006 with the launch of the e-service portal. However, until 2006, Kazakhstan did not implement any projects to digitize the public sector. Addressing the people of Kazakhstan in 2006, President Nursultan Nazarbayev outlined four key stages in the development of digitalization from 1997 to 2006:

- I stage (1997-2000) Strategic planning stage of state informatization.
- II stage (2001–2003) - the stage of development of basic information infrastructure in the field of public administration. The National Program for the Formation and Development of the National Information Infrastructure in Kazakhstan in 2001 is, in fact, the first tool for informatization of public administration.
- III stage (2004–2005) - the stage of introduction of new technologies in the field of public administration. Adoption of a national e-government program is the most important step at this stage.
- IV stage (2006-present) is unique for the first practical results of the introduction of e-government. On April 12, 2006, the website www.e.gov.kz was

launched. The main achievement of this period was the adoption and operation of the «Digital Kazakhstan» program in 2017 [16].

The process of digitization of public and political activities in Kazakhstan, along with the system of public administration has had a direct impact on the efficiency of political institutions and the introduction of democratic values. When Kazakhstan first introduced digital technology services to the public service sector in 2005, Kazakhstan was listed as a «closed, authoritarian» country by the Freedom House Research Center on the Democracy Index [17]. Although it rose to 29th place out of 193 countries in the e-services index in 2020, it was described by Freedom House as «closed, authoritarian» in its 2021 edition. rose to 94th place in the country. [18]. An important part of the state program «Digital Kazakhstan 2018-2022» is the vision of human capital by increasing the digital literacy of citizens. Improving the basic digital skills of the population is one of the initiatives that, along with the creation of a digital ecosystem for business and the state, encourages entrepreneurs to adapt to new technologies to increase productivity. The purpose of the state-run program is to increase the e-skills of the people. In Kazakhstan, we have seen that reforms on the digitalization process are relatively achieving the goals set in strategic, government programs.

Conclusion

Digital technologies have become one of the important political tools of government institutions. Regardless of what extent state structure is digitized, political processes are changing their form from offline to remote digital format. In the example of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the process of digitization, in relation to information and communication services, has a political-institutional function too. In the Republic of Kazakhstan, fundamental democratic values take some digital nature. For example, people's participation to the policy has been rising with the help of social networks, the forming of a unique culture of online petitions, public financial policy quarterly are becoming a new norm thanks to the process of digitization, etc. In this context, the implementation of digital technologies in the field of public-government services in Kazakhstan has indirectly contributed to the democratization of political institutions, the index of corruption.

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Айтымбетов Н.И., Нышанбаев Н.К.
Цифрландыру үрдісінің демократиялық саяси институттар мен мемлекеттік басқару жүйесіне ықпалы: Қазақстан Республикасы мысалында

Аңдатпа. Цифрлы технологиялардың қоғамдық-саяси өмірдің саласына интеграциялануы әлемдік тәжірибеде басты тенденцияға айналып отыр. Саяси үрдістерде цифрлы технологиялардың қолданылуы құжат айналымын қысқартуға және мемлекеттік

аппараттың жұмысын жеңілдетуге мүмкіндік жасайды. Еңбекті автоматтандыру, робототехника, жасанды интеллект, үлкен мәліметтер базасы, 3D басып шығару, блокчейн, интернет кеңістігіндегі сөз бостандығы сияқты ұғымдар ұлттық экономикаға жаңа серпін беріп, оның инновациялық әлеуетін арттырады. Мемлекеттік басқару жүйесіне цифрлы технологияларды енгізу – бұл тек іс-әрекеттерді «қашықтықтағы формаға» көшіру ғана емес, сонымен қатар үлкен деректерді цифрлық тұрғыда басқару, кең ауқымдағы ақпаратты игеру немесе «сандық миграция процесі» деп атауға болады.

Қазақстанда соңғы онжылдықтар бойында ғылыми зерттеу орталықтары мен саясаткерлер мемлекеттік басқару саласына цифрлық технология мен инновацияны белсенді енгізуді талқылап келеді Біріншіден, мақала авторлар цифрландыру үрдісінің саяси институттар мен мемлекеттік басқару жүйесіне ықпалын анықтайтын ауқымды ғылыми әдебиеттерге шолу жасап, зерттеу жұмыстары арасында негізгі ғылыми пікірталастарды анықтайды. Екіншіден, цифрландыру үрдісінің қоғамдық саяси институттардың қызмет етуіне ықпалын анықтап, цифрландару үрдісінің демократияны қалыптастырушы рөліне талдау жасалынады. Үшіншіден, цифрландыру үрдісінің саяси институттарға ықпалын Қазақстан Республикасы мысалында талданады.

Түйін сөздер: саяси институттар, электронды үкімет, цифрландыру процесі, демократиялық құндылықтар, азаматтық қоғам.

Айтымбетов Н.И., Нышанбаев Н.К.
Влияние процесса цифровизации на демократические политические институты и систему управления: на примере Республики Казахстан

Аннотация. Интеграция цифровых технологий в сферу общественно-политической жизни стала важной тенденцией в мировой практике. Использование цифровых технологий в политическом процессе создает возможность сократить документооборот и упростить работу государственного аппарата. Такие понятия, как автоматизация труда, робототехника, искусственный интеллект, большие базы данных, 3D-печать, блокчейн, свобода слова в интернет-пространстве дают новый импульс национальной экономике повышают ее инновационный потенциал. Внедрение цифровых технологий в государственное управление – это не только перевод действий в «дистанционную форму», но и цифровое управление большими данными, получение больших объемов информации или так называемый «цифровой миграционный процесс».

В Казахстане на протяжении последних двух десятилетий исследовательские центры и политики обсуждают активную интеграцию цифровых технологий и инноваций в сферу государственного управления. Во-первых, авторы рассматривают обширную научную литературу, в которой изучается влияние процесса цифровизации на политические институты и государственное управление, а также выявляют ключевые научные различия между исследовательскими работами. Во-вторых, определено влияние процесса цифровизации на функционирование общественных и политических институтов, а также проанализирована роль процесса цифровизации в формировании демократии. В-третьих, на примере Республики Казахстан анализируется влияние процесса цифровизации на политические институты.

Ключевые слова: политические институты, электронное правительство, цифровизация, демократические ценности, гражданское общество.