COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SPREAD OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES BASED ON THE STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCE OF THE UK AND KAZAKHSTAN*

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the role and impact of digital technology on political participation and development in countries such as the UK and Kazakhstan. Despite the decline in trust in traditional representative institutions and politicians, people are ready to participate in the public sphere. Digital technologies provide additional opportunities for expressing this involvement. Citizens participate in online conversations, consultations and discussions can contribute to the causes they support, share their opinion through digital platforms that help hold public institutions to account. The article also notes that digital transformation has offered a new set of tools for political management, contributing to its widespread use. Digital technologies also affect the political and civil society landscapes. Digital technologies offer ways to improve the quality of political governance in terms of accountability and responsiveness. Digitalization can offer public administration new channels for delivering quality services. The digitalization of public administration is driven by the political will to deliver better services while achieving cost-effectiveness, but it is not without challenges: effective change is driven by end-user needs and must be accompanied by an enabling environment.

Keywords: Political Participation, Digital Technologies, Great Britain, Kazakhstan, Political Activity.

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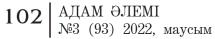
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Ұлыбритания мен Қазақстан тәжірибесін зерделеу негізінде цифрлық технологиялардың таралуы жағдайында саяси қатысудың салыстырмалы талдауы

Аңдатпа. Бұл мақалада сандық технологияның Ұлыбритания мен Қазақстан сияқты елдердегі саяси қатысу мен дамудағы рөлі мен әсері қарастырылады. Дәстүрлі өкілді институттар мен саясаткерлерге деген сенімнің төмендеуіне қарамастан, адамдар қоғамдық салаға қатысуға дайын. Цифрлық технологиялар бұл қатысуды білдіру үшін қосымша мүмкіндіктер береді. Азаматтар онлайн-әңгімелесулерге, консультацияларға және талқылауларға қатысады, олар қолдайтын себептерге үлес қоса алады, мемлекеттік мекемелерді жауапқа тартуға көмектесетін цифрлық платформалар арқылы өз пікірлерімен бөлісе алады. Мақалада сонымен қатар цифрлық трансформация саяси менеджмент үшін құралдардың жаңа жиынтығын ұсынып, оның кеңінен қолданылуына ықпал еткені атап өтілген. Сандық технологиялар саяси

және азаматтық қоғам пейзаждарына да әсер етеді. Цифрлық технологиялар жауапкершілік пен жауаптылық тұрғысынан саяси басқару сапасын арттыру жолдарын ұсынады. Цифрландыру мемлекеттік басқаруды сапалы қызмет көрсетудің жаңа арналарын ұсына алады. Мемлекеттік басқаруды цифрландыру үнемділікке қол жеткізе отырып, жақсырақ қызметтер көрсетуге деген саяси ерік-жігермен негізделеді, бірақ бұл қиындықтарсыз емес: тиімді өзгерістер түпкілікті пайдаланушының қажеттіліктеріне байланысты және қолайлы ортамен бірге жүруі керек.

Түйін сөздер: саяси қатысу, цифрлық технологиялар, Ұлыбритания, Қазақстан, саяси белсенділік.

Сравнительный анализ политического участия в условиях распространения цифровых технологий на основе изучения опыта Великобритании и Казахстана

Аннотация. В данной статье рассматривается роль и влияние цифровых технологии на политическое участие и развитие в таких странах как Великобритания и Казахстан. Несмотря на снижение уровня доверия к традиционным представительным институтам и политическим деятелям, люди готовы участвовать в общественной сфере. Цифровые технологии предоставляют дополнительные возможности для выражения этой вовлеченности. Граждане участвуют в онлайн-разговорах, консультациях и дискуссиях, могут вносить вклад в дела, которые они поддерживают, делиться своим мнением через цифровые платформы, которые помогают привлечь государственные учреждения к ответственности. В статье также отмечается, что цифровая трансформация предложила новый набор инструментов для политического управления, способствуя ее широкому использованию. Цифровые технологии также влияют на политические ландшафты и ландшафт гражданского общества. Цифровые технологии предлагают способы повышения качества политического управления с точки зрения подотчетности и оперативности. Цифровизация может предложить государственному управлению новые каналы для предоставления качественных услуг. Цифровизация государственного управления обусловлена политической волей к предоставлению более качественных услуг при одновременном обеспечении экономической эффективности, однако она не лишена проблем: эффективные изменения имеют в основе потребности конечных пользователей и должны сопровождаться развитием благоприятных условий.

Ключевые слова: политическое участие, цифровые технологии, Великобритания, Казахстан, политическая активность.

Introduction

Digital technologies have an impact on every aspect of life, from the economy to government, from geopolitics to how ordinary people interact. The process is moving at a very fast pace, to the point where it seems that some technologies, especially artificial intelligence, may soon lead to revolutionary changes for which people, institutions and societies are not yet fully prepared. In recent years, many states have begun to reflect on these issues in order to help their members identify the challenges associated with digital technology and better prepare to take advantage of the opportunities it offers. Global technology firms have provided a new infrastructure for public debate and interaction, the Internet has made information freer and more accessible, and now people can express their opinions easier than ever before. Nevertheless, despite the fact that they are becoming more familiar, many questions remain about how these new resources should be mobilized within the framework of political governance. In this connection, **the purpose** of this study is to compare the role of digital technologies in the process of political participation in the countries of Great Britain and Kazakhstan. **The research question** is as follows: how digital technologies can influence the development of political participation in modern society.

Governments use several mechanisms for public participation at various stages of

policy development, including voting, polls, public meetings, open forums and opinion polls. Public participation is a continuation of democratic processes and helps governments to interact with citizens on an ongoing basis and in a more direct way.

The COVID–19 pandemic accelerated the process of interaction through digital technology, as many political institutions needed to switch to online mode. As a result, in 2020, these processes led to an increase in electronic participation of citizens in political governance. Electronic participation is the process of involving citizens in the process of making public decisions using this technology, for example, through websites, social networks or text and instant messages. E-participation strengthens cooperation between government and citizens by facilitating broader public participation, analysis of large amounts of information received from citizens, and two-way communication between government and citizens. However, despite increased investment in digital technologies, this technology is not being fully used by Governments to expand e-participation.

Research Method

The research method consists of a review of scientific articles, as well as an analysis of statistical indicators and a comparative analysis of the use of digital technologies in the political participation of Great Britain and Kazakhstan. The study is descriptive in nature and is based on the results of previously published works in both statistical and comparative analysis. The literature review was conducted in several databases: The Cochrane Library, Elsevier, Academic.edu , Research gate. After a bibliographic review, articles with the best methodological base on the research topic were selected. Conference materials, collections and government reports on the implementation of digital technologies

in the political sphere were also used for analysis.

Literature Review

One of the first to define the concept of "political participation" were Verb S. and Ni N.H. According to the authors, political participation was defined as "the activity of private individuals, more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of government personnel or the actions they take" [1, p. 2]. However, since then, there have been significant changes in terms of both its structure and its scale. According to some authors, going beyond the previous differences between conventional and non-traditional, political participation now manifests itself in a wide variety of individualized, creative, expressive and everyday forms of interaction with social and political problems [2, p.14], [3, p.349]. Indeed, the very concept of political participation has undergone significant changes in recent years to accommodate these changes: van Dett's "conceptual map of participation" now offers a tool for defining any emerging activity as being inside or outside one of the four main categories of participation [3, p.351]. However, the question remains whether and how the emerging forms of participation represent the emergence of more comprehensive forms of participation.

The study by Theoharis Y., de Moor J., van Det J.V. examines whether the expansion of political participation represents a continuation of the previous logic of participation in new forms and regimes or a more fundamental shift in how citizens participate in politics [4, p.31]. One of the most famous places to expand citizen participation today relies on online means. According to research by Earl J., Kimport K. online participation, as it is often called, involves a wide range of activities that range from fairly static posting of political content on government forums to signing a

petition on a "petition repository website" such as Change.org, to interactive actions such as responding to a local to a representative on Twitter or posting a request for support on a question of interest on Facebook [5, p.123], [6, p.71], [7, p.3].

Gibson R., Kantiyoh M., Bimber B., Stoll K., Flanagin A.J., Hirsalla F., van Zoonen L., Auxerre J., Huget M., Marien S. note that the hybridization of some online and offline forms of participation and the increasing blurring of boundaries between these spheres when it comes to political organization have provided that online activity and offline activity are now closely intertwined. At the same time, several approaches to online participation consider it a continuation of some offline actions in the online sphere [8, p.701], [9, p.72], [10, p.481], [11, p.91].

According to R. Schroeder, the integration of digital technologies into a democratic context has changed the political environment in terms of content and format diversification. It is noted that social networks such as blogs, Facebook and Twitter open up additional opportunities for political participation. This article is intended to contribute to the literature by analyzing the impact of digital media in the context of their role in changing approaches to political organization and campaigns, with an emphasis on a case study of British politics [12, p.168].

The use of social media to participate in politics may indicate more fundamental changes. The technological possibilities of Web 2.0 technologies have changed the landscape of participation, and various forms of participation can indeed offer completely new opportunities for participation in politics. In particular, the authors emphasize the unique characteristics of what has been called "digital network participation", defined as "network personalized action based on mass media, which is carried out by individual citizens with the intention of demonstrating their own mo-bilization and activating their social networks in order to raise awareness or exert social and political pressure to solve social or political problems" [13, p.6].

Several studies use the concept of digital network participation and the type of activity, including in the context of mobilization, inequality of participation, the consequences of selective influence on participation and youth activism [14, p. 11]. Moreover, it has been shown that manifestations of digital participation are crucial for the formation of political self-esteem, such as political self-efficacy and interest, strengthening of political self-representation of people in social networks and their public commitment to their image of politically active [15, p.429]. Thus, digital participation has many manifestations, which can range from loud, symbolic and interactive (for example, attaching #MeToo to a political message on Twitter, identifying with #ClimateChangeIsReal by changing your Facebook profile and to less intense actions, such as comments via tweet to an ongoing public discussion on a political issue [16, p.276].

Results and Discussion

Participation in political life on the Internet is part of civic engagement, and its main actions, such as the dissemination of political information, are aimed at influencing government actions and policy-making. The United Nations measures and ranks member countries by the use of digital technology infrastructure to transmit government information to citizens. This includes providing information about policies and budgets, consulting with citizens in the policy-making process, and enabling people to make their own contribution to the public decision-making process. The survey results are intriguing because they show that e-participation varies significantly around the world, but at the same time there are countries with different in-

come levels, democracy and technological infrastructure that rank side by side. There is a limited amount of research on a global scale to give an idea of why e-participation differs in different countries. We will consider only two countries. In order to understand how actively the political participation of citizens in the digital space is developed, it is important to understand what percentage of the population uses the Internet.

According to the UK government report called "Annual Estimates of Internet Use in the UK by Age, Gender, Disability and Geographical Location" 92% of adults in the UK are Internet users in 2020, compared with 91% in 2019. Almost all adults aged 16 to 44 in the UK have recently used the Internet (99%), compared to 54% of adults aged 75 and over. Although there have been minor changes in Internet use

by adults aged 16 to 44 in recent years, the proportion of people aged 75 and older who have recently become Internet users has almost doubled since 2013, from 29% to 54% in 2020. 6.3% of adults in the UK have never used the Internet in 2020, compared to 7.5% in 2019 [17].

In comparison with the UK, Kazakhstan is certainly inferior, but the difference is not so high. In general, if we consider Kazakhstan from the point of view of digitalization, then the country has a high potential and a developed structure. In Kazakhstan, the share of Internet users, as well as in the UK, has been growing every year. According to the latest results, the percentage of users across Kazakhstan is 88.2%, which is 4% higher compared to the previous year. The leaders are the cities of Nur-Sultan, Almaty, and two regions: Karaganda and Pavlodar regions (see Table 1.).

Table 1. The share of Internet users from the total population aged

a) Kazakhstan

	2018	2019	2020
The whole country	81,3	84,2	88,2
Akmola region	73,8	79,4	84,6
Aktobe region	81,1	85,7	88,0
Almaty region	85,3	85,4	88,7
Atyrau region	78,1	80,7	80,7
West Kazakhstan region	76,9	80,4	83,9
Zhambyl region	80,9	81,6	86,0
Karagandy region	73,9	80,5	93,1
Kostanay region	85,7	86,9	87,1
Kyzylorda region	77,7	77,9	80,0
Mangystau region	78,9	82,3	85,9
South Kazakhstan region	-	-	-
Pavlodar region	83,3	85,7	93,0
North Kazakhstan region	77,0	81,2	88,9
Turkestan region	84,8	89,6	92,5
East Kazakhstan region	79,2	81,7	84,1
Nur-Sultan city	88,1	91,7	94,5
Almaty city	84,3	87,7	91,8
Shymkent city	80,0	80,1	82,3

Source: Bureau of National Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan

b) Great Britain

	2018	2019	2020
The whole country	89,8	90,8	91,2
North East	87,6	87,7	88,6
North West	89,0	90,0	91,0
Yorkshire and the Humber	87,9	89,8	90,7
East Midlands	88,4	89,9	91,3
West Midlands	88,7	88,7	90,9
East of England	90,6	92,0	92,2
London	92,6	93,0	94,9
South East	92,0	93,0	94,2
South West	89,8	92,3	93,3
Wales	88,9	89,6	90,2
Scotland	89,2	89,6	91,3
Northern Ireland	85,6	86,7	88,0

Source: UK Bureau of National Statistics

In the UK, unlike Kazakhstan, the development of political participation by means of digital technologies began much earlier. One of the main differences is that in the UK there was an experience of online voting during elections. Also, the election law has been changed to allow local authorities to experiment with various forms of electronic voting. State-funded pilot projects that tested various types of electronic voting were first conducted in local government elections in 2000 and were significantly expanded in local elections in May 2002 to include remote electronic voting. In England, pilot voting was held in May from 2000 to 2006. In 2000 and 2004, the London mayoral elections and in 2004, the elections to the European Parliamentary Assembly were counted using an optical scanning voting system [18, p.63]. In both elections, some editing of the design of the ballots was required to facilitate electronic counting of votes, although they differed only slightly from the previous ballots in the style of "cross-marking". In their more limited form, these pilot projects provided for the provision of computer terminals at polling stations. However, there have also been numerous pilot projects of "multi-channel" electronic voting, allowing voters to vote remotely via the Internet, phone or SMS, often with the possibility of pre-voting before polling day. The most systematic piloting of electronic voting in the United Kingdom took place in Swindon, where remote voting projects were conducted at polling stations via the Internet, telephones and digital television, as well as the use of mobile kiosks for electronic voting and laptops at polling stations. Despite the fact that the reviews of these elections were positive, the evaluation reports of the Election Commission (electroalcommission.org.uk) testified to extreme disappointment, pilot projects of electronic voting had practically no effect on turnout [19, p.3].

According to some researchers, the biggest challenge when using digital technology in political processes is the following:

- it is necessary to create an IT system that should verify the identity of about 50 million users within 15 hours;

- the IT system should anonymously register votes so that it is impossible to

establish a connection between the confirmed personalities and the votes cast;

- to store data on these votes in such a way as to ensure independent verification and verification after the election and in a form that absolutely cannot be changed or manipulated after the fact;

- to ensure absolute reliability, without any possibility of hacking, penetration or even just a failure during the voting period.

Experts note that even a small failure in any of these points will undermine one of the foundations of the governance system — the recognition of the democratic legitimacy of the government [18, p.65], [20, p.29].

Kazakhstan also amended the law in March 2004 to allow electronic voting. The electronic voting system "Sailau" was first deployed in Kazakhstan during the parliamentary elections in September 2004 [21]. Within a short time, the system has undergone modifications and improvements concerning both hardware and software. It should be noted that at that time the introduction of electronic voting systems was considered in Kazakhstan as part of the e-governance agenda along with the promotion of various technological solutions in the field of public administration, such as, for example, e-public procurement, e-cooperation, e-education and other related platforms. Practically all interested parties considered it as part of nation-wide digital administrative reforms aimed at improving the efficiency of state institutions and reducing huge public funds [22, p.305]. Therefore, the introduction of electronic voting was carried out through traditional promotion channels, such as directives, resolutions and decrees of central state bodies, as well as in the field of electronic government.

An analysis of the experience of the two countries shows that in the case of Kazakhstan, the electronic voting system is technically considered "insufficiently implemented" to be fully implemented in national elections. It is interesting to note that from the point of view of software developers, trust in electronic voting is a context-dependent political phenomenon, since technologies "have no limits of perfection", but there is always a technical possibility to manipulate election results, regardless of whether we believe in technology or not. Thus, the public sector and civil society are obliged to ensure proper verification of such systems at all stages: procurement of equipment and software, verification of software source codes, selection and summing up procedures, etc. The experience of both countries shows that there is always a potential problem, since it is impossible to exclude the risk of manipulating the results of voting in electronic voting.

Political participation in the application of digital technologies is also actively used in calls for political action. So in the UK, comedian Eddie Izzard sent only one tweet with #GE2015 a week before the election, expressing his personal opinion about why he is #NotVotingUkip. His post was retweeted 769 times, as a result of which, this led to the appearance of a category of citizens supporting his position. @RobertsonSteff, the account of a citizen speaking for the Scottish National Party, sent just 10 tweets. However, one in particular with an image of her daughter waving the Scottish flag received 1,125 retweets. Despite the fact that @RobertsonSteff had only 418 subscribers (compared to 3.7 million at @EddieIzzard), this led to the popularity of this party among citizens. There are many such examples when civil activists or just citizens used digital technologies and social networks to exercise their right to political participation. The analysis also showed that in the UK, some policy areas related to digital technologies have been delegated to the delegated leadership and fall under the digital strategies of decentralized governments, namely the digital strategy of Scotland, the digital strategy

of Wales, the digital strategy of Northern Ireland.

There was also a similar situation in Kazakhstan, when the population expressed their support for the state through hashtags: #Kazakhstan, #bizbirgemiz. In particular, #bizbirgemiz was popular during the coronavirus pandemic, which carried a sense of support for the whole country. Another hashtag with a more political basis is #zhanakazakhstan. In this case, how to perceive this hashtag depends on the context itself, since it can contain both positive and negative meanings. In the course of the analysis, it can be seen that in both countries the participation of citizens in social networks has increased other types of civic activity, for example, helping to organize protests and fueling interest in politics, even if it does not manifest itself in traditional forms of participation. However, it has been found that policies implemented on the Internet are more susceptible to "filter bubbles" that limit participants' exposure to opposing views and thus contribute to polarization.

Conclusion

Digital technologies have changed our lives and will continue to do so. Kazakhstan's economic future, jobs, wages, prosperity, national security, cost of living, productivity, ability to compete globally and our geopolitical position in the world depend on the constant and growing success in the field of digital technologies. That is why the country should strengthen its position in the development of digital technology, and therefore it is important to study the experience of other countries. Kazakhstan, in comparison with other Central Asian countries and even Russia, already have good platforms for government institutions and for citizens. In the end, it becomes clear that politicians on both sides need to look more consistently at the relationship between political participation and technology. Research shows that there has been a surge of interest in this topic, and, in particular, there is a desire in the United Kingdom to enact regulation in order to "set a global standard for a risk-based, proportionate regulatory framework". While our analysis has demonstrated a degree of consistency in the values and ideals that politicians promote and seek to protect, we have also identified areas of inconsistency and tension that, if not addressed, could lead to regulatory difficulties.

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