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Lala Afig Jafarova
European Association of Health Law

POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS IN TIMES OF AI, AND ETHICAL ASPECTS OF THE DIGITALIZATION IN POLITICS

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Author
Lala A. Jafarova is a PhD student at the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences. She has Fogarty/NIH Program Master's Certification in Research Ethics and is a member of the National Ethics Council (NEC).

https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9918-7677
lala-j@hotmail.com

Abstract
As a result of globalization, and modern scientific and technological development, information technologies began to cover an increasing number of areas, including politics. The issue actualizes as we enter the Artificial Intelligence (AI) era. In times of AI, increasing scientific influence on politics was manifested in the development of a new scientific field – Digital Diplomacy. The development of AI and the changes taking place today can transform the political processes, imposing new threats to the political systems and the entire system of international relations. In this context, ethical issues are of particular concern because they can be blurred by the political decisions made by digital/computer program algorithms; that is, giving power to computer programs to make political decisions can destabilize the political system. This issue is particularly sensitive in terms of ensuring justice and protection of state political interests. The presented paper aims to discuss political transformation in the context of the modern digitalization process, the work of political institutions, and digital diplomacy.

Keywords
Political Institutions, Digitalization of Politics, Digital Diplomacy, AI, ethics.

Introduction

Globalization of the modern world has reached unprecedented proportions, and the digitalization process is accelerating it. The number of online services is increasing and gradually entering global politics. Online meetings of political leaders and international entities were unthinkable in the past century, but modern science, digital technology, social networks, and other means of communication transform the world. Digitalization reshapes all processes at a rapid pace, rendering some news headlines obsolete in a matter of seconds.

One of the manifestations of the digital transformation of various spheres of social life, including the political domain, is the enhanced capacity for information transfer enabled by the Internet. This phenomenon was particularly noticeable during the novel corona-

virus pandemic (COVID-19). Thus, against the background of the pandemic, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly held its first 'virtual' meeting in 2020 (UN Affairs, 2020). Even discussions of presidents and ministerial meetings were held online.

Expansion of digitalization and development of social networks has, to some extent, altered the way we perceive global affairs. Nowadays, individual politicians, political institutions, and government entities, including the Foreign Ministries of different nations, maintain their online presence through websites and social media profiles. Frequently, they use online platforms to express their stances on various issues. In essence, social media has evolved into a crucial tool for contemporary politics, enabling politicians to engage with their country's citizens and interact with various international stakeholders.

Online space has become not just a reflection of processes occurring in real life. It has become a tool that also sets the tone and leads to the emergence of new processes in real life, including in politics, *i.e.*, becomes a factor influencing the formation of public opinion.

The integration of digital technologies into politics and diplomacy comes with both advantages and disadvantages. On the positive side, it facilitates the acceleration of processes and broadens the scope of potential recipients. In the past, before the era of digitalization and the Internet, countries relied on official letters and other traditional means of communication. Today, however, official positions can be conveyed swiftly through digital channels (social media accounts), instantly reaching a global audience via the Internet. The negative side of the process is characterized by emerging threats in the digital or cyber space, such as hacker attacks or the spread of disinformation, as well as the expansion of opportunities to use these technologies in the military sphere. All those issues necessitate a comprehensive analysis of mentioned processes in the context of political science.

Main definitions and purpose of the study

We would like, firstly, to specify the main definitions used in the paper. Key concepts such as "digital politics"/"e-politics", "digital diplomacy" are defined and approached in the work based on the existing research. Based on the data studied, we assume that digitalization is already actively involved in the work of political institutions. In particular, in the work of foreign policy institutions, it has manifested itself in the development of digital diplomacy.

Political institutions. In the scientific literature there are many approaches to defining the concept. According to Gilad (2015), they represent "a set of formal rules (including constitutions), informal norms, or shared understandings that constrain and prescribe political actors' interactions with one another." In the context of this study, we consider them as structures that implement political activities.

Digital diplomacy. The concept of digital diplomacy is based on the description of diplomacy itself in the framework of the use of scientific technologies for its implementation. According to Bjola & Manor (2024) digitalization in diplomacy is not equivalent to digital diplomacy, which the authors characterize as the field "encompassing a broader perspective of the role of digital technology in diplomacy". In general, digital diplomacy changes the structures and methods of diplomacy, and also requires flexibility from political institutions in the use of information technologies to implement foreign policy. Various approaches to the concept are described in the corresponding section of the paper.

Artificial intelligence (AI). Digitalization is closely related to the development of AI technologies. According to Britannica, AI is "the ability of a digital computer or computer-controlled robot to perform tasks commonly associated with intelligent beings" (Copeland, 2024). Since these technologies can have a wide range of applications, their regulation becomes the subject of ethical and legal discussions, and, as a result, the adoption of various mechanisms for their use. The very concept of "digital politics" is described on the basis of existing approaches, which are analysed in the work.

The main purpose of the study is to analyse previously mentioned concepts, as well as to study the impact of digitalization on politics in general, its ethical aspects, and emerging regulations; to generate descriptive knowledge by meticulously describing digitalization in politics, including in diplomacy with the focus on the work of political institutions. For this purpose, various aspects of digitalization in politics and the role of AI are accessed. Using a narrative literature review, the paper explores how digitalization affects the functions and practices of political institutions and diplomacy.

Digitalization of Modern Politics

Development of mobile Internet technologies has made it possible to ensure constant and prompt access to information among people. Today, smartphone owners spend a considerable amount of time on the Internet, in particular on social networks. Thus, according to the data for 2023, the number of Internet users is about 5.19 billion, which is about 64.6 percent of the world's population (Statista, 2023) and, the number of social network users is about 4.9 billion (Wong) accordingly. Such an impressive number of users cannot remain outside the influence of political processes. Hence, the advancement of contemporary global politics is characterized by the process of digital transformation.

The development of digital technologies has affected the format of modern politics, while "AI is shaping" (Butterfield, 2018) its future. Today, the study of the impact and significance of AI technologies on politics is becoming the subject of research not only by individual scientists, but also by targeted Centres, such as the Centre for Technology and Global Affairs at Oxford University. The main directions of the Centre's research are the study of the impact of technology on political governance and on politics from a political viewpoint (Butterfield, 2018). The university's website contains a collection of works on the topic of "Politics and Policy in a Digital World", which also reflect Studies in Digital Politics.

The Internet and social media platforms enable various forms of online surveys, public opinion analysis, as well as interest and political sentiment tracking. Political institutions, such as political parties, and political foundations, also utilize social media (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2012; Pātruţ & Pātruţ, 2014; Fatema, Li, & Dong, 2022) to communicate openly with the public (*e.g.*, political campaigns, electoral marketing) and stimulate political dialogue, thus conveying their political perspectives through online networks and accelerating the digitalization of politics.

While traditional norms of diplomatic etiquette and face-to-face interactions remain relevant, digital transformation of political processes is an undeniable reality in the contemporary world. Statements by politicians and official state institutions made in the digital space acquire political status (Sheraliev, 2023). Through official channels on social networks and profiles of leading politicians and diplomats, states interact with the audience, using these platforms in their information policy, which, acts as soft power (Mavrodieva

et al., 2019; Háberová, 2019). The growing influence of social media is reshaping global soft power dynamics as politicians engage in digital diplomacy, facilitating easier yet more intricate global connections and challenging traditional models of influence with information being new political power.

Increased interaction with technology transforms society with a corresponding impact on the processes of world politics. On the one hand, social networks allow the creation of virtual interest groups and unite various social groups, facilitating communication with the target audience. On the other hand, there is a certain fragmentation of political processes, accompanied by a large amount of disinformation, fake news, and corresponding discrediting of opposing political forces. Therefore, dissemination of reliable information about government positions and official policies through social networks has become one of the main goals in modern politics.

Digital platforms enable more efficient and complex global interactions, while posing new threats to conventional political mechanisms. Often the positions of countries may differ and contradict one another. The clash of opposing views and the promotion of one's position becomes the subject of an information war or "information warfare" (Di Pietro, *et al*., 2020), where social media can function as a (political) "tool" (Prier, 2017).

Semi-official communication between politicians takes place on social networks too, since they provide an opportunity to give public answers or refute false information. Therefore, digital platforms have created the opportunity to conduct information policy, including lobbying for political interests or ensuring information security.

Social media can be used to promote political ideas and build potential electorates. However, according to Neudert & Marchal (2019), initially praised for its potential benefits to democracy, digital technology has since revealed its capacity to erode citizenship, democracy, and the global liberal order. The authors note that "thriving on new media ecosystems", various populist groups can take on the role of leading political actors.

One of the more striking examples of the digitalization of politics is the emergence of online voting. Thus, some countries, such as Estonia and Switzerland, provide the opportunity for online voting (Heiberg, Laud, & Willemson, 2012; Hanschitz, 2017; Górny, 2021), which is reflected in the emergence of the corresponding terminology – "i-voting".

The political life of modern states is actually transferred to the digital space. One of the clearest proofs of this is the digitalization of various government services, which is reflected in the development of "electronic government" (abbreviated as "e-government"). There are various definitions of e-government in the scientific literature, in particular, according to Von Haldenwang (2006), it is characterized as "the strategic, co-ordinated use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in public administration and political decision-making."

The direction of research on e-government lies at the intersection of political science and computer science. Analysing the processes of digitalization, which especially accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic, some scientists (Grinin, Grinin, & Korotayev, 2022) believe that the emerging "sociotechnical systems of self-regulation" will also lead to a change in political relations in society, which will be expressed in a shift towards "e-government and e-state." Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic has become a powerful impetus for the digitalization of all processes, including those related to politics.

Today, the number of digital services (within e-government) is developing in many countries, including the USA, European countries, etc. According to the UN ranking

(2020) Denmark, the Republic of Korea, and Estonia lead the list of countries with the most developed digital government services in terms of "capturing the scope and quality of online services, status of telecommunication infrastructure, and existing human capacity".

At the moment, the area of digital services in the political context, with the exception of e-government, which makes it possible to evaluate processes at the state level, in the international sphere has become the subject of the emergence of innovative approaches, in particular those related to diplomacy as well as security issues.

AI use in Politics

AI is increasingly playing a significant role in politics, transforming various aspects of the political landscape and processes. Its use can come in many forms, from speeding up the process to malicious purposes such as creating deepfakes. Gruetzemacher & Whittlestone (2022) argue that the potential of AI in the development of the public services sector allows us to talk about its ability to transform technologies; the goals and practical application of AI, however, depend on political rather than technological factors. Gregg (2018) also believes that the use of AI can have potential threats, affecting human rights, democracy, law, and social inclusion. However, the author argues that AI does not pose a political threat unless people allow it or become dependent on it. Therefore, we believe, its use in politics must be assessed from the legal and ethical perspective.

In general, currently in our view there are the following main directions of the AI use in politics:

– *Use in political campaigns*. The use of AI technologies in elections is increasing, which is reflected in the increase in scientific works in this direction. Thus, a recent article published in Harvard Magazine (Barton, 2023) begins with the following words: "History will look back at 2024 as the first AI election". Thus, the start of the 2023 US election campaign was widely discussed in the media, since the official video of the Republican Party according to the media was created entirely using AI (Stepansky, 2023).

AI and Machine Learning have transformed election campaigns globally (Md. Safiullah & Parveen, 2022) by leveraging big data to comprehend voters' psychological and behavioural traits, sway them towards specific politicians or parties, and create bias against opponents. This shift involves the utilization of technologies like deepfakes and automated social media bots to manipulate and influence voters' opinions throughout the campaign. Targeting swing voters also plays a key role in election campaigns. Thus, a recent study from Mexico argues that "political speeches frequently use fallacies to sway voters during electoral campaigns" (Nieto-Benitez *et al*., 2023). Analysing the use of AI for malicious political purposes, a number of researchers characterize them as "bad actors" and express fears that they will "generate harms across social media globally" (Johnson, Sear, & Illari, 2023) and their influence will grow. However, the use of generated false or misleading information is already a legal and ethical issue.

– *Predictive analytics*. According to Kazić (2023) such analytics "refers to the use of advanced analytics in predicting future events on the basis of current and historical data, through application of different techniques rooted in the use of artificial intelligence, such as statistics, data mining, machine learning, etc." In our opinion, from a politics point of view, identifying historical experience and collecting data is most important during the

development of political programs, which can be significantly accelerated with the help of AI technologies.

Political campaigns can, to some degree, be associated with conducting political analysis in order to suggest policy steps that have a chance of improving the candidate's popularity. However, this analysis can also be conducted independently by individual organizations, research groups, etc. in order to collect scientific information, identify public opinion, etc. Although the publication of such material itself may have hidden political implications. Analysis of a huge amount of data allows not only to identify key issues of interest to society, the most popular and supported, or, on the contrary, rejected ideas, but also allows the identification of political figures who hold the same opinion. All this creates conditions for establishing communication and adapting lobbying activities.

– *Facilitating communication*. The involvement of AI technology in the activities of politicians and governments is increasing. Programs that can automatically respond to, or analyse, public sentiment and implement other political goals; "political chatbots" (Kim & Lee, 2023), are often used. Thus, the study by Mann (2020) indicated that the use of a political chatbot that reminded people of elections and polling stations helped mobilize voters and increased turnout by 1.8%.

Using generative AI, personalized messages can be created that target specific groups of voters. The very identification of these groups can also occur through mass data processing, which in an accelerated mode is only possible with the use of high technologies. Data analysis algorithms pave the way for AI-driven guidance towards state assistance and personalized public services (Curtis, 2023). Therefore, AI's ability to generate quick, impactful content becomes a game-changer, making communication more efficient and accessible.

– *Policymaking and governance*. According to some authors AI "brings science to the art of policymaking" (Patel *et al*., 2021) by development of evidence-based programs, forecasting outcomes, and analysing effectiveness. Tools created on the basis of AI can be used in governance, for example, to provide services to citizens and automate administrative tasks. Although their use has several advantages, such as increased accessibility, issues of transparency and accountability create certain ethical issues.

– *Improving accessibility and participation ("digital democracy")*. The widespread use of technology to communicate on political agendas contributes to the development of "digital democracy," which can be described as a form of political participation using digital tools. Digital innovations transform democratic decision-making and include the use of "mobile apps, online platforms, and algorithms for citizen engagement" (Sgueo, 2020).

Ethical considerations and regulations of AI

The possibility of using AI technologies to manipulate public opinion through the work of external intelligence services, using tools such as disinformation, microtargeting, spreading fake news, and creating deepfakes raises concerns from a political point of view.

AI capabilities are particularly dangerous in the modern military sphere, especially in the context of weapons of mass destruction such as nuclear weapons, where their use can "make future wars unpredictable and unaccountable" (Adebahr, 2023). Although AI may enhance the capabilities of weapons systems and contribute to national security, delegating full autonomy to such systems entails potential risks. Moreover, the proliferation of

AI may have significant implications for the dynamics of diplomacy, world politics, and increase the role of private actors, mainly Big Tech and companies developing AI tools.

Digital data has a significant role in the political context, as it enables us to conceptualize "cyber power" (Aquino, 2022) as an element of national security, or "cyber security" (Aslan, *et al*., 2023). The importance of cyber security as a component of politics is confirmed by the emergence and functioning of targeted government structures in various countries, such as the Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy that operates within the U.S. Department of State and participates in the country's foreign policy in the field of cyberspace and digital technologies. Another example is the "DiploFoundation", the non-profit organization created jointly by the governments of Malta and Switzerland, which held the Summit on Digital Diplomacy and Governance in 2022. That organization also has a Special Consultative Status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It implements numerous projects and research on the topic, trains professionals, and provides a platform for international cooperation in the context of digital policy through the associated Geneva Internet Platform.

The use of AI technologies raises various ethical concerns, including issues of privacy, transparency, trustworthiness, etc., which are also relevant in the political sphere, so there is a growing body of research on "ethical governance" and ethical implications of governance in times of AI (McEvoy, 2019; Daly *et al*., 2021; Uzun, Yıldız, & Önder, 2022; Carlsson & Rönnblom, 2022). According to a recent study (Savaget, Chiarini, & Evans, 2018), AI-based technologies and the release of public data can empower civil society by enabling citizen and public participation in democratic processes, which may revolutionize political processes and interactions between government and citizens. However, as the use of AI in politics can also have negative consequences, this issue goes beyond the philosophical approach (Coeckelbergh, 2022) and moves into the realm of legislation, and there is increasing discussion about the need to adopt an international document on the regulation of AI.

The "First-ever global agreement" on the Ethics of AI was adopted by 193 UN member states in 2021 (United Nations, 2021). In fact, the document (UNESCO, 2021) represents a "Recommendation" regarding the use of AI. Areas of political action mentioned in the Regulation do not cover politics. However, its article 9 indicates that, where necessary, in order to comply with the principles and values set out in the document, existing legislation should be amended or new legislation developed, that should be consistent with "internationally agreed social, *political*, environmental, educational, scientific and economic sustainability objectives". Article 110 also mentions the need to ensure "critical evaluation of AI research and proper monitoring of potential misuses or adverse effects", which should be provided through research in various disciplines, including international relations and political science.

The European Union (EU) "AI Act" is the "first regulation" on AI (European Parliament, 2023) within the framework of the European region. Although it has not yet been adopted, a large number of works have already explored its ethical and legal aspects (Smuha *et al*., 2021; Veale & Zuiderveen, 2021).

Issues of Digital Diplomacy are also actively considered within the Council of EU. Thus, on June 26, 2023, it formed "Conclusions" (CoEU, 2023), which indicate a call for increased digital cooperation, in particular in the context of developing coordinated positions within the Global Digital Compact (GDC) – "a bold step towards digital transfor-

mation" (EU, 2023). The GDC is an initiative put forward by the UN Secretary-General in 2021, which aims to "outline shared principles for an open, free and secure digital future for all" (UN, 2023). That initiative covers numerous fields for cooperation such as the promotion of regulation of AI, removing barriers to the political participation of young persons, and is being considered by the UN in connection with the agenda for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, which include digitalization issues and actualize co-operation among countries in this field.

Another international organization that has formed principles on AI use is the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which also hosts the Secretariat of the Global Partnership on AI initiative launched in June 2020. The organization has established the OECD AI Policy Observatory, which collects information and creates dialogue in this area. Thus, in 2019, it prepared a Recommendation for the use of AI. The principles noted in the Recommendation became the "first such principles signed up to by governments", reflecting various public policies and strategies for the development of AI (OECD, 2019; 2022). Among the recommendations noted in the document is "international co-operation for trustworthy AI", as well as "transparency and explainability". However, given the potential of AI both within the military industry (Tangredi & Galdorisi, 2021; Rickli & Mantellassi, 2023) and for intelligence purposes, we believe that transparency in this context will be somewhat difficult and is already considered a national security issue by some authors (Hoadley & Lucas, 2018; Johnson, 2019).

Digital and Public governance are among the topics covered by OECD (2023) research and areas of work, which included involvement in the preparation of the report as part of the G7 Hiroshima Process on Generative AI, which outlined policy priorities. As part of this process, the G7 Digital & Tech Ministers' Statement was also presented. Thus, the ministers announced certain guiding principles within the framework of the development and use of AI, including the responsible exchange of information between organizations developing AI and governments. The Hiroshima Process has become an important starting point for strengthening cooperation in the field of AI between countries, as the mentioned principles evolve and are intended to become "guardrails on a global level" (European Commission, 2023). Through the development of the Principles, the G7 countries aim to create a Code of Conduct, which will be used as a guide for organizations involved in the development of AI tools.

New political initiatives in the field of AI proposed by individual states also appear on international agendas. Thus, on October 18, 2023, Global AI Governance Initiative was introduced by President Xi Jinping within the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation.

Consideration of issues related to the use of AI attracts the attention of politicians and legislators not only at the international level, but also within individual countries. Thus, the bill known as the 'AI rulebook' presented in the UK is noteworthy as it is presented as being different to the EU approach. The corresponding government resource (GOV. UK, 2022) notes that the EU approach does not capture "the full application of AI and its regulatory implications." Accordingly, the UK approach involves creating an "innovative framework" for AI regulation, based on cross-sector principles tailored to the specific characteristics of AI (du Preez, 2022).

The US is also developing various approaches to explore the possibilities of AI. Thus, in April 2023, the US Homeland Security chief announced the creation of an AI task force

(Hesson & Bartz, 2023). In 2021, the National AI Initiative Act was passed in the US. The document addresses the role of AI in enhancing the national security and the efficiency of Government operations, which are crucial aspects of its political relevance.

This study does not have the scope to examine the legislative initiatives on AI in depth. However, we can observe a clear trend of developing new regulations for AI technologies in practice, both at the international and national levels. We anticipate that the range of such documents will increase with the advancement of technology and the emergence of potential threats. Nevertheless, it is evident that politics, as a significant aspect of public life, will not escape the impact of AI, which is already noticeable today.

Modern trends in research on Political Institutions in Times of AI and Digitalization

Based on the data presented earlier, we can conclude that digitalization and the introduction of AI in politics and, accordingly, diplomacy, is a young, developing area and its importance will increase as science develops. Since the digitalization process has already covered the political sphere, the development of new academic disciplines and the training of specialists in these cross-sectoral areas is required.

The sharp leap in the development of digitalization against the background of COVID-19 (Eom & Lee, 2022; Moser-Plautz & Schmidthuber, 2023) justifies the need for a detailed study of these trends through the prism of politics and the general work of political institutions.

Based on the information obtained during the analysis of the content of the works, in our opinion, the following principal areas of research can be identified in the studies on the role of political institutions in the context of digitalization and the use of AI:

The use of digital technologies in communication, in particular communication through social networks through the creation of relevant profiles of government organizations or political figures, email exchange etc.

Strengthening of the democratization in society, which is accompanied by the processes facilitating access to information for users and the possibility of online requests or even voting, which, however, also has certain risks.

Information warfare, propaganda, or disinformation. Political opponents and even various states can use online resources for the purposes of propaganda and disinformation, to influence public opinion. Special programs – bots can be created to spread false information.

Each of the mentioned areas already represent agendas for ethical research. In general, research indicates a growing interest towards that fields among researchers. Moreover, new platforms are created that reflect news and work in this direction, *e.g.*, Harvard Kennedy School (Smith & O'Neill, 2019) implements work on rethinking "policy in digital world".

E-politics — Digitalization of Diplomacy

The academic literature does not have a consistent way of writing some terms, such as "e-diplomacy"/"ediplomacy", "digital diplomacy", "cyber diplomacy". We will not dwell in more detail on the term e-diplomacy, as most of the literature reduces it to digital, based

on the terminology proposed by Hanson (2012) or its variations with regard to the use of ICT in foreign policy/politics that will be discussed further.

The emergence of the concept of digital diplomacy was the result of modern processes associated with digitalization. A number of authors believe that digital (the term e-diplomacy is also used) and cyber diplomacy are equivalent and can be viewed as interchangeable concepts (Sotiriu, 2015; Riordan, 2016; Adesina, 2017; Singh, 2018), however, other authors take a different approach (Barrinha & Renard, 2017; Callanan, *et al*., 2022), believing that this type of diplomacy reflects issues of cooperation in the field of combating cybercrime or ensuring cybersecurity (security in the digital space). Cyber diplomacy as the use of digital technologies to achieve foreign policy goals and address emerging challenges in international relations, is a key tool of interstate competition and conflict, including information warfare.

Modern understanding of digital or cyber diplomacy is based on the definition of diplomacy itself as a sphere that characterizes "types of human relations" (Sharp, 1999), specific to international relations/international studies (IR/IS). Sheraliev (2023) believes that as "one of the main parts of the digitalization of IR" such diplomacy can be defined as "the use of digital technology tools in the national interest as part of a state's diplomatic policy", which can include not only "the efforts of the government", but also "the efforts of non-power parties, opposition and protest movements".

A. Hansen (1984) was the first to examine the implications of computerization for public diplomacy. However, the term "digital" gained prominence with the advent of social media and internet-based communication. One of the earliest examples of digital diplomacy in action was the official email exchange between Heads of Government Carl Bildt and Bill Clinton in 1994 (Pelling, 2015; Fletcher, 2016). This marked a significant step towards using the Internet for political contacts and communications globally.

Modern understanding of digital diplomacy originates from the term "electronic", described by F. Hanson (2012) as "the use of the web and new ICT to help carry out diplomatic objectives". That is, the first studies in this field mainly covered the possibilities of using information technology. Sebastian Chihaia and Rempala (2021) define it as the use of "the Internet as a tool to further public diplomacy goals and outreach".

The active development of digital diplomacy is associated with the expansion of Internet accessibility in the early 2000s. Gradually, the use of digital communication began to become part of the routine practice of diplomats and relevant structures, especially foreign ministries, that used digital technologies "to annihilate time and space, transcend national borders, overcome hostile media landscapes and interact with the populations of enemy nations" (Manor, 2019). One of the first examples of the use of digital capabilities in the context of diplomacy is the creation in 2006 of the Digital Outreach Team (DOT) at the US Department of State (Khatib, Dutton, & Thelwall, 2012; Al-Rawi, 2019). It was used to visit blogs, chat rooms and websites, and communicate with visitors for the purpose of countering terrorism.

Although digitalization transforms or complicates "traditional diplomacy" (Hedling & Bremberg, 2021), it also facilitates it. If earlier we were talking about simple digitalization of the process of conducting public diplomacy (Manor, 2019), today it is expanding, ensuring the transformation of political society; *i.e*., extends to a wider range of problems of managing the global digital space, as well as the development of norms of behaviour for states in the ICT environment (Hanson, 2012; Riordan, 2016; Pilegaard, 2017).

If we summarize the existing literature, we can conclude that digital diplomacy as a direction was formed as a result of the transformation of public diplomacy in the Internet space, the development of which has led today to a mix or "hybridity and the integration of online and offline" (Hocking & Melissen, 2015) in politics.

Thanks to the development of the Internet, it has become much easier for diplomats, and politicians in general, to collect the necessary information and transmit it to the required authorities, in other words, to use "digital technologies to engage in global politics" (Tereshchenko, 2023). Moreover, its processing has been significantly accelerated thanks to the use of digital technologies and AI. Thus, today it is possible to search by keywords, subscribe to the profiles of certain structures and public figures with the ability to be notified when updates appear. All these technologies and new opportunities contribute to the development of digital diplomacy.

The concept of cyber diplomacy is more specific, in our opinion, and it is not equivalent to digital, although it is closely related in the context of cybersecurity (Verrekia, 2017; Hedling & Bremberg, 2021; Konovalova, 2023). Thus, according to Barrinha and Renard (2017), cyber-diplomacy is "the use of diplomatic resources and the performance of diplomatic functions to secure national interests with regard to the cyberspace". We will not discuss the very concept of cyberspace since this goes beyond the scope of political science and requires a more technical approach.

Although we were unable to find a unified definition of e-politics, works in this field mainly cover the use of ICT in the political sphere, including a wide range of activities such as online/Internet campaigns and digital political advertising, the use of social networks for political discourse and mobilization, etc. (Potter & Manatt, 2002; Wattal, Schuff, Mandviwalla, & Williams, 2010; Hinnant & Steven Burton Sawyer, 2011). Its description, as in the case of e-diplomacy, requires an integrated approach in the context of a combination of technical knowledge and political insight.

Conclusion

Globalization and the development of digital technologies are contributing to the increased implementation of AI in political processes. A key role in this is played by the development of social networks and the expansion of opportunities for the exchange of information and communication in the political field. Expanding the possibilities of using modern digital technologies in politics has strengthened the process of its digitalization, including foreign policy, which is expressed in the development of digital diplomacy.

The use of digital technologies influences the democratic process by creating conditions for political mobilization and polarization of public opinion. An analysis of the subject literature helps to suggest that digitalization has become firmly entrenched in political life and science. This process is accompanied by the active use of AI, including by political institutions. Although this process involves certain ethical considerations, the international community, both at the levels of individual countries and of organizations, is working to develop and adopt new regulations.

Research into the role of political institutions in the era of digitalization focuses mainly on how digital platforms can be leveraged to foster more effective communication between citizens and their representatives. This encompasses exploring the potential of social media, online forums, and other digital tools to facilitate increased transparency, accounta-

bility, and responsiveness within the political sphere. Although digital technologies can be used to foster communication, the democratization of society, and facilitating public participation in political processes, it can also have negative consequences, including that digital platforms can be used for the purposes of disinformation or hacker attacks, which raises issues of cybersecurity or the security of the country's cyberspace. That is why many countries are beginning to pay close attention to these issues, creating new structures and developing regulations.

Modern trends indicate an increasing importance and role of digitalization in the work of political institutions. This creates the preconditions for expanding research in this area. However, the development of policy measures is closely related to the need for their legal assessment in the new digital space. Moreover, we believe that the number of cybersecurity and AI specialists in policy teams will increase, since with the development of science, technological capabilities are expanding, creating both new opportunities and challenges in the political space.

The development of digital technologies is paralleled by the emergence of new security threats in the digital space. We believe this will explain the desire of countries to develop new regulatory mechanisms in this direction. Thus, if in 2021 UNESCO countries adopted a global agreement on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, then already by 2023, a number of countries adopted an international agreement on the safety of AI (Guidelines for secure AI system development). Although there are discussions at the global level about the need for digital regulation, the most progressive step in this direction can be seen as the adoption of the AI Act within the EU. Its very adoption is a political step and although it is intended to regulate relations in the digital field, we believe that this will also have an impact on their political component. In January 2023, the EU also updated the Zero Draft [Framework] Convention on Artificial Intelligence, Human Rights, Democracy, and the Rule of Law.

We believe that with the development of digitalization in society, its influence on politics will increase, impacting the work of political institutions. Emerging digital threats require the involvement of politicians in accessing their legal and ethical aspects, and the development of new political response measures; accordingly, the number of legal instruments for international regulation will grow with the advent of innovative technologies.

Today we are witnessing a transformation of society and the transition of relationships to the digital space. Politics will be increasingly influenced by digitalization and therefore, we believe, studying the possibilities of digital technologies will, sooner or later, become a matter for politicians. Digital etiquette will become an integral part of diplomatic etiquette and use of AI will become routine in the work of political institutions.

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