

**POLITICS IN THE AGE OF DIGITAL MEDIA, NETWORKING AND
GLOBALIZATION: AN EXCITING ENDEAVOUR OR A BANE?**

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ABSTRACT

Digital age is the era of digital advancement. Digitalization of information utilizes an electronic system which processes data in the form of digits. Introduction of advanced means of communication, widespread networking and globalization has enabled easy access to information for masses across the globe. Political scientists deal with the structuring and working of political systems and policies that enable certain obligations and rights to people and government, respectively. In the wake of 21st Century the modern man has shifted his focus towards interacting with the global society rather than remaining restricted locally between the borders of his nation-state. Great power politics has been shaped by wars, economic shifts and technological advancements. So keeping in view the significance of digital advancement and its impacts on the global political scene, this research study

discusses the opportunities, impending perils or uncertainties that are faced by global actors in the digitally advanced age.

INTRODUCTION

Digital age is the era of digital technology. Digital technology is a comparatively more advanced system than analog technology and is described as the electronic technology that processes the received data in the form of digits such as a set of 2 (binary), 8 (octal), 10 (decimal) or 16 (hex) digits, etc (Rouse, 2005). In the post modern world, the phenomena of digitization and digitalization due to adoption of digital age have emerged as; a tool that generates opportunities, a curse that makes certain perils inevitable and also as a ghost that is impregnated with numerous uncertainties regarding the future of mankind in this universe which haunt the political think tanks (Leong, 2019).

In the wake of 21st Century the modern man has shifted his focus towards interacting with the global society rather than remaining restricted locally between the borders of his nation-state. The adoption of the phenomena of globalization has enabled the public to interact, communicate, grow, reflect and think in a comparatively wider approach than the past generations due to feasible influx of information technologies, media network and digitalization of money flow and intellectual property (Elishar-Malka et al., 2020).

The world has faced frequent power shifts in the last two centuries. The colonial super powers of the 19th Century controlled far flung territories to extract natural and raw resources to allow a full-fledged and unrestricted boom to the Industrial Revolution. Such colonialism generated a wide gap between the industrially developed global North and the resource rich but underdeveloped global South. The next phase of global power shift was inclined towards the sole hegemonic face of United States of America which was visibly prominent after the end of cold war. Since then, a thirst for oil and other raw resources of the super power has brought many middle-eastern countries to the brink of collapse.

The expansion of global free trade and offshore businesses have let many nation-states emerge as influential regional and global actors such as China, India, Russia and Japan, etc which pose a great deal of threat to the supremacy of the sole super power (Darshan and Suresh, 2017).

The digitalization of world economy had faded away the national boundaries and has let a global society to emerge (Malik, 2016). Such mechanism has surpassed the geographical as well as governmental barriers and approached the individual in any corner of the globe only by the distance of a single click due to the advancement in information technologies and easy access to internet services (Ipsos, 2014). Hence the society is digitalized. People feel more connected.

The multinational corporations have emerged as the creators of a globalized culture; fading away the exquisite local traditions. They influence and control the thinking patterns of their consumers by airing advertisements on mass media, community media, social media sites, billboards, etc and conquer the minds of diverse consumers across the globe. Widespread networking, global trend setting, discussions among young people on social media sites and unbridled expression of public sentiments have created new challenges for the national decision makers and power players in the international arena (Santos and Santos, 2021).

The international relations among nation-states, the stance of politicians on preserving the national interest, security dilemma faced by States, need for coordination on international

forums, the foreign and local policies of States, the attitude of media persons and the expressed public opinion; all are greatly transformed in the present digital age than that of the past centuries(Runciman, 2015).

Due to the technological advancement certain inevitable perils and uncertainties are; the threat of cyber warfare among the State actors as well as between State and Non-State actors, another haunting threat is the access of non-state catalysts to nuclear arsenals, the States are seen to indulge in structural advancement of destructive arsenals in an effort to become more devastating which is curse of digital age (Hansen and Nissenbaum, 2009).

Yet many opportunities of development for living beings in adverse conditions and for improving the lifestyles of the rich have been discovered as a blessing of digital age.

a. Digitalization of Information: How it Shapes Political Science for Actors and Think Tanks in the Global Society?

Political science explores questions about power: what it is, where it comes from, who exercises it, how it is used and legitimized. Concretely, political scientists study the processes, policies and institutions of different political systems as well as critical issues such as health care policy, civil rights, origin of wars, the nature of democracy, the causes of authoritarianism, the meaning of justice, and the genesis of terrorism. Global power politics is very impulsive. The shifts in power between global leaders in politics have mainly occurred due to three major factors; wars, economic shifts and technological advancements. Accessing historically, the digital advancement as witnessed in the 21st Century has caused prominent changes in international relations and the way governments work at home.

b. Impact at Intra-State Level

At domestic levels, the public is aware of their rights and the governments are accountable to the ruled which makes authoritarianism a far cry (Korman and Barsaw, 2016) such as Arab Spring and Myanmar. Democracy has emerged as the most pronounced norm to maintain political systems across the globe with majority of States owing to it. Democracy has the greatest public support because it represents a system accountable to people rather than dictatorship or authoritarianism. Digital technologies have made people aware of voicing their concerns and mobilizing campaigns by the help of social media outlets. Such outflow of emotions and distress allows for a catharsis in the society (Gilardi, 2016). Misinformation among people can also be spread and allow chaos much more easily in the concurrent digital age.

c. Is Politics Exciting Endeavor for State Governments or a Bane?

Digital technology allows the politicians and leaders to know about the wishes, desires and aggression of their people without them even remaining anonymous. The governments can work to resolve the pathos of public by implementing policies for the welfare of their people rather than ignoring the concerns of those who voted for them.

Digital technology can be used by influential pressure groups to mobilize the public against the government. The State peace and harmony can be disrupted and chaos can result due to misinformation and exploitation of digital means (Wang, 2017). People can get enraged against a particular creed, class or group. Unbridled sectarianism can rise if the majority of public relies on the fake information provided by certain influential mass media outlets such

incidents have happened in third world countries where the majority population is illiterate and blind follower. Religious zeal and nationalism can be perpetrated by influential groups for the sake of their vested interests. So, the government has to remain vigilant more than the past to tackle the impending risks of technological advancement in the information sector. Terrorist organizations can spread their attractive message and organizational structure to influence the unemployed young population to join their force and spread threat and terror in society.

Digital technology shapes the way the social or scientific research is done. The political scholars, social scientists, biological, chemical and physical scientists, etc use latest technologies to undertake their research work in the developed countries. In the global South lack of research and development restricts the advancements and innovations which are necessary to be undertaken for meeting the needs of floods of population. Machine learning, big data (Gilardi, 2016& Wang, 2017), research tool kits are fostering transparency, collaboration between the disciplines as well as easily accessible intellectual property adds on to the knowledge of new researchers greatly. A State can prosper if it advances in the industrial, technological and information sector but advancement always arises from the intellect of think tanks of any State. The more a State researches the more it excels in the global pace. United States of America is currently the leader in the research field but the efforts made by China and India are commendable in the current century and pose a challenge to US supremacy in Asian and Pacific region in the near future (Malik, 2012).

The Governments of developing and third world countries can engage the think tanks in a more encouraging way (monetarily and technologically) to research and innovate the traditional ways of farming, production, construction, teaching, planning and structuring curricula for creating a generation that is more concerned towards collaboration and preservation of environment rather than indulging in arms race. Environment friendly and sustainable ways of using resources should be thought about. The political scholars should be tasked upon to research and make comparative analysis of national policies adopted by prosperous States and to formulate a comprehensive framework for their domestic government systems by using the information systems which are widely available due to the digital age. Cyber experts must be employed by the governments to conduct surveys online so that they become aware of the public opinion and work in collaboration with the social and political scientists (Andersson et al., 2017).

Cyber attacks and hacking from belligerent States can disrupt the governmental functioning and sensitive information can be leaked out posing a threat to State sovereignty and danger to the State security as a whole. Cyber warfare can be waged by terrorist organizations against the government and cause threat to the nuclear arsenals of nuclear bearing countries as well as information data can be deleted by cracking codes (Cebul and Pinckney, 2021). So, these uncertainties and risks haunt the newly developed digitally connected systems in the State and remain as a constant cause of threat for the government and the people.

d. Impact of Digitalized Access to Information at International Level

Globalization and digitalization have connected the world under the umbrella of a linked global society. The multinational food corporations spread the western culture to other continents and people willingly adopt it as their own thus creating a global 'McDonaldization' of local cultures. The advertisements aired by the transnational companies create a global cultural metamorphosis making the national boundaries and territorial differences a faded concept

(Blix, 2015). However, in particular, individuality rather than metamorphosis matters the most to people but networking and digitalization of information has created a mixed identity of people in general. The features of the Westphalian international system are all blurring. “The absolutes of the Westphalian system,” writes Jessica Matthews, “territorially fixed states where everything of value lies within some state’s borders; a single secular authority governing each territory and representing it outside its borders; and no authority above states—are all dissolving” (Mansbach, EOLSS).

In the digital age, technology has proved to be game changer in international politics such as the Cold War scenario exemplifies how the dialogue and diplomacy between States can be shaped by technological advancement and digital supremacy (Malik, 2012).

States of the post modern era mostly concern about building up influential diplomatic ties with other States under the umbrella of United Nations collaborative mechanism but the security threat lies at heart of every leader regardless of flowery debates. Technological supremacy is the desire of each State actor to compete in the economic era. Governments of developed countries can collaborate with their surrounding less developed countries to engage in sustainable development by using the digital technology rather than programming mechanisms for engaging into cyber warfare (Hansen and Nissenbaum, 2009).

Technological sharing should be practiced to encourage development projects in a collaborative manner (Blix, 2015). All the States should focus on building up eco-friendly development programs, formulate a mechanism to become aware of natural disaster forecasts in poor countries, rehabilitate the starving and sick, and to eradicate wars in the resource rich regions. Moreover, development schemes should be started by the developed countries to assist the war-torn States to attain stability. The international organizations should ensure that members implement upon policies made for collaboration among States. If such measures are adopted then the world would become a better place for the future generations.

If the technology is used for evil mechanisms such as upgrading nuclear arsenals, biological and chemical weapons and spreading disease and death to the common man for vested interests sooner or later the world will face a demise and return back to the stone age because people are all same and death in one region will never bring prosperity to the other. Sooner or later the Europe will diminish of aging population (Andersson et al., 2017) and the global South will starve to death due to lack of water. So, it is up to the international actors, organizations and States individually to contribute towards saving the planet for future generations by the positive and eco-friendly use of digital technology (Malik, 2016).

ANALYSIS

War, technological and economic advancement are the factors that have shaped the international global orders in the past. Globalization has transformed the world into a digitalized global society. People regardless of territorial differences feel themselves connected to each other due to the rise in access to mass media, social media sites and networking services. Cyber warfare haunts security and national sovereignty of Westphalian Nation-State system. Digitalization can reform the less developed regions in an environment friendly mechanism by the assistance of developed region.

CONCLUSION

Governments on the national level can be held accountable by the people because people interact with each other on mass media, social media and other information outlets. People are aware of their rights and obligations more than the past centuries and express their opinions freely than ever. The idea of territorial differences has faded due to the rise of a global prevalent culture. Individuality is a more liked perspective to be expressed rather than loyalty to a nationalistic ideal in the young generation. Digital advancement can enable the underdeveloped to prosper and allow sustainable growth with the assistance of developed global North. China and India are progressing in digital technologies by leaps and bounds and pose a threat to U.S. supremacy in the technological world. Any country can attain progress by focusing and making use of digital access in a productive manner by enabling more researches. Hence, it can be concluded that politics in the digital age has become more transparent in its form, so it can act as a bane for the leaders that are not loyal to their nation, because their discrepancies cannot remain hidden in today's interconnected world. On the other hand, loyal politicians can enjoy politics as an exciting endeavor by creating varied avenues of sustainable progress for the nation, state and world as a whole, because spreading positive message is just a click away in this digital age.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Digital media, networking and globalization should be used positively by stakeholders to create awareness among masses and build positive inter-state relationship. The researchers of underdeveloped countries should seek training from developed country researchers so that they innovate new technologies as per the need of their homeland. The developed and nuclear bearing countries should use the nuclear advanced technology for environment protection, innovation for production management and other human friendly purposes. States should grant monetary benefits to researchers because think tanks drive progress in a country. Digital age has reduced the barrier of time and space among people, therefore, loyal politicians should devise policies to make the best use of their authority and decision-making power.

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