

Renewing Political Legitimacy and the Role of Technology: Toward Consolidating the Transition from Representative Democracy to Digital Democracy

تجديد الشرعية السياسية ودور التكنولوجيا: نحو تكريس الانتقال من الديمقراطية التمثيلية للديمقراطية الرقمية

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الملخص:

من أكثر ما يميز ملامح عصر اليوم هو الثورة الرقمية ومختلف مخرجاتها ذات الأبعاد التنموية والساعية للتحويل ضمن مفاهيم متعددة ومتنوعة وعلى رأسها التحول الرقمي، ذو الامتداد الواسع في تأثيراته، والتي لم تسلم منها حتى البيئة السياسية في بنية الأنظمة السياسية وأسس الشرعية الديمقراطية. لذلك كانت هذه الدراسة قائمة على معالجة منظور جديد للديمقراطية في حلتها المعاصرة التي تقوم على الاستثمار في معطيات التكنولوجيا الخوارزمية كواقع تقني يهدف لبناء مفهوم جديد للديمقراطية، وهو الديمقراطية الرقمية، وذلك حين العمل على أسس وأطر تجديد الشرعية السياسية، وذلك لما لاحظ من عجز قنوات العملية التمثيلية التقليدية في استيعاب تطلعات وطموحات المواطن في المشاركة الفورية والمباشرة في تكلفة قيم الديمقراطية ونسعى من خلالها لتحليل دور التكنولوجيا في تجديد الشرعية السياسية، عبر دراسة التحولات العميقة التي أحدثتها أدوات التكنولوجيا في العلاقة بين المواطن والدولة، وما ترتب عنها من إعادة رسكلة مفاهيمية للمشاركة السياسية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الديمقراطية الرقمية؛ المشاركة المدنية الرقمية؛ التحول الرقمي الديمقراطي؛ الحوكمة الإلكترونية؛ المواطنة الرقمية.

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Abstract:

Among the most distinctive features of the present era is the digital revolution and its various outputs with developmental dimensions, which seek transformation within multiple and diverse conceptual frameworks, foremost among them digital transformation, whose effects extend widely and have not spared even the political environment in the structure of political systems and the foundations of democratic legitimacy. Accordingly, this study addresses a new perspective on democracy in its contemporary form, one that is based on investing in the data of algorithmic technology as a technical reality aimed at constructing a new concept of democracy, namely digital democracy. This occurs through working on the foundations and frameworks for renewing political legitimacy, particularly in light of the observed inability of traditional representative process channels to accommodate citizens' aspirations and ambitions for immediate and direct participation in shaping democratic values. Through this study, we seek to analyze the role of technology in renewing political legitimacy by examining the profound transformations brought about by technological tools in the relationship between citizen and state, and the resulting conceptual repositioning of political participation.

Keywords : Digital Democracy; Digital Civic Participation; Democratic Digital Transformation; E-Governance; Digital Citizenship.

Introduction:

Digital technology, in light of the rapid transformations witnessed globally, has become one of the most influential factors in reshaping the structure of the political system and the methods of practicing political processes. This digital revolution, with its tools for communication, interaction, and information exchange, has prompted a reconsideration of the traditional foundations of political legitimacy, which were previously established on electoral representation and partisan and institutional mediation. With the expansion of digital spaces and the growing societal use of them, new possibilities have emerged for involving citizens in debate, decision-making, and monitoring governmental performance, thereby allowing for the emergence of different approaches to understanding the nature of legitimacy within the modern concept of the state.

The transition from the model of representative democracy to digital democracy does not primarily aim to eliminate the role of institutions, but rather to enhance their effectiveness by investing in technological tools to broaden the base of popular participation and activate mechanisms of transparency and accountability through the consolidation of the principle of interactive participation.

Digital practices, through the use of open governmental platforms, big data initiatives, electronic voting systems, and participatory applications, bring citizens closer to the center of the political process and provide opportunities for immediate influence and continuous interaction with public policies.

This spread has contributed to the construction of a new political environment in which political legitimacy is tested through the degree of alignment with the requirements of the new generation, which seeks flexible models and transparent openness. Accordingly, the renewal of political legitimacy no longer requires periodic recourse to ballot boxes, but is instead

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linked to the capacity to use technology as a mechanism for strengthening public trust, improving it, expanding spaces for participation, and enhancing the quality of policies.

The aim of this study is to analyze the foundational role of technology in reproducing political legitimacy and to demonstrate how digital transformation contributes to strengthening the pathways of transition toward the digital concept of democracy as a new political model that transcends the boundaries of traditional representation toward more open and inclusive participation, reflecting the aspirations of modern societies for more efficient and rational governance.

Its significance emerges from analyzing this fundamental intersection between technology and democracy as an embodiment of profound transformations in contemporary political systems in the age of digitization, given that it has become a genuine framework for shaping the relationship between the citizen and the state, constructing new patterns of political participation, and creating communication spaces that are more interactive and open.

Study Problem:

The study of this topic revolves around examining the sources of legitimacy in the contemporary state and how digital tools can play a role in enhancing trust, transparency, and governmental responsiveness, thereby contributing to the construction and strengthening of the social contract within frameworks of good governance.

The central problematic of this paper is defined as follows: How do digital tools contribute to reshaping political participation and redistributing the roles of actors within it? To what extent are they capable of supporting the transition from a representative democracy model to a modern model of digital democracy as a mechanism for renewing political legitimacy?

Study Methodology

The descriptive analytical approach will be employed, in addition to features of the comparative approach and certain characteristics of the critical approach.

Study Structure:

The first section: Digital transformation and the renewal of legitimacy.

The second section: Toward a legal framework to ensure digital democratic legitimacy.

1-Tilte I: Digital Transformation and the Renewal of Legitimacy

Digital transformation represents one of the most prominent structural variables in reshaping the relationship between the state and society in recent years. With the widespread diffusion of digital technology, political practices are no longer confined to traditional frameworks. Instead, they are increasingly moving toward new forms of direct and continuous interaction between citizens and authority. This transformation simultaneously constitutes both an opportunity and a challenge, as it opens the way for rethinking the foundations of political legitimacy and the mechanisms for achieving and consolidating it within a context in which citizens' expectations are evolving and the tools of participation and expression are developing.¹

1.1- The Impact of the Digital Revolution on the Structure of the Political System

In light of the new reality of democracy and its linkage to various human rights, including political rights and similar rights, political systems have sought to identify innovative mechanisms for enhancing citizens' trust and developing more rational communication tools.²

A) The Impact of the Digital Revolution on the Structure of the Political System

In light of the new reality of democracy and its linkage to various human rights, including political rights and similar rights, political systems have sought to identify innovative mechanisms for enhancing citizens' trust and developing more rational communication tools.³

1- Digital Technology as a Transformative Element of the Public Sphere:

Digital technology today has moved beyond being merely a tool of entertainment or a social intermediary to become one of the most significant factors that have reconfigured the image of the public sphere in the digital age.⁴ In traditional practice, interaction was confined to social and media institutions and to physical forums in which opinions were exchanged and citizens participated in public debates.

With the widespread expansion of the internet, social media, and interactive platforms, a digital public sphere has emerged, characterized by openness, speed, and the transcendence of physical boundaries. This has enabled the emergence of unprecedented patterns and levels of communication and the circulation of information shaping public opinion in decision making processes.

Digital technology has thus become, within the public sphere, a force for change and guidance, providing citizens with new opportunities for expression and participation outside traditional environments.⁵

1.1- From the Crisis of Political Legitimacy to Digital Legitimacy

The emergence of digital democracy has led to a reconstruction of the concept of political legitimacy according to a new logic that transcends the traditional model in which legitimacy derived its existence from electoral delegation and legal compliance. It has expanded to include additional and novel dimensions based on continuous interaction, transparency, and direct participation. Under this transformation, legitimacy has acquired a new standard grounded in the authority's ability to:

- Digitally empower citizens to access information without barriers.
- Involve individuals in policy formulation through participatory platforms.
- Enhance trust through open data that allows immediate evaluation.
- Ensure digital governance that facilitates social oversight and increases the clarity of decisions and the pathways for their implementation.

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In this manner, political legitimacy becomes a continuous dynamic process that is not limited to a periodic electoral act but is renewed through every digital interaction between the state and the citizen.

Despite the capacities offered by digital technology for renewing legitimacy, it has simultaneously introduced new forms of legitimacy crises. In the digital age, the commonly recognized crisis of legitimacy no longer results solely from weak political representation or limited performance. Rather, it has become associated with the state's ability to keep pace with technological transformation and accommodate its complex demands. The manifestations of the new digital legitimacy crisis take shape in:

- The digital trust gap develops because people lose faith in government digital systems, which leads to reduced transparency and missing data security guarantees.
- Digital exclusion emerges because people experience different levels of technological access and usage ability, which leads to social group disparities in political representation.
- The current legal system fails to keep up with digital progress because existing laws do not provide enough protection. This results in a gap between technological applications and political operations.
- State institutions generate two main problems about algorithmic legitimacy because their decision-making processes through artificial intelligence tools make it difficult to understand how these systems operate and verify their decision results.

The current crisis of legitimacy no longer centers on representation because it has developed into a crisis which affects both transformational processes and digital system implementation. The state needs to achieve technology equity for its renewal of legitimacy because it will create a transparent governance system, which people can trust.

1.2- Principles and Dimensions of Digital Democracy

Digital democracy is not merely a recent hybrid or experimental phenomenon. Rather, it emerged as a fully developed concept, founded upon principles that, once formed, required dimensions within the framework of the modern concept of political practice. Among the most important principles it seeks to activate in practice are:

- Integrated participation.⁶
- Values rooted in the broader values of democracy.
- Its association with good governance and the foundations and efficiency it entails.
- Respect for freedoms and rights.

As for its dimensions, they are:

- **Electronic Transparency and Trust:** Electronic transparency refers to the principle based on making digital information available in a clear, understandable, and

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verifiable manner for users or competent authorities. Electronic trust, in contrast, denotes the consolidation of a belief in the user's mind that the digital system is secure, respects privacy, and operates fairly without bias. These two dimensions are linked by a causal complementary relationship, as the availability of transparency leads to the construction of trust, whereas the absence of transparency results in a lack of trust.

- **Democratic Participation:** Individuals who participate in public political activities work to shape decision-making processes through their direct or indirect involvement. It constitutes a practical expression of the application of the principle of popular sovereignty. The advancement of technological society brought about a fresh system which enables citizens to participate in democracy through electronic means that include voting online, and digital platforms for public discussions, and social media-based campaign activities.
- **Digital Divide:**⁷ The digital divide refers to disparities among individuals or societies in access to information and communication technologies and in the ability to use them efficiently. The availability of internet access stands alone because it does not cover how people use the internet or their ability to handle digital technology. The problem exists beyond its technical nature because it creates legal and developmental obstacles. These impact social justice and democratic participation. The increasing use of artificial intelligence in human activities demands that we bridge digital inequalities because it stands as an essential requirement to provide everyone with equal access to digital rights.

2- From the Leading State to the Networked State

The modern state, amid the developments of the current decade, has undergone numerous transformations in its structure as a result of technological advancement and digitalization. It has moved from the model of the leading state, based on centralized decision making, a rigid hierarchy of authority, and monopolistic control over the production and direction of information, to the model of the networked state founded on participation, interactivity, the exchange of information, and openness to various types of actors within civil society and beyond.⁸

2.1- Between Two Models: Approaches and Realities

Through digital transformation, as noted above, a new concept has emerged, namely the networked state, replacing the command state, which is based on a set of values that, when combined, constitute the foundation of its structure.⁹ These values are represented in:

- A strong hierarchy in both decision making and policy formulation.
- The monopolization of information production and its direction through designated institutions, which has fostered bureaucracy.

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- Centralized control in the management of public policies.
- Public authority that proceeds from leadership toward citizens without effective mechanisms of interaction.

By contrast, the networked state is characterized by interaction, openness, and participation. It does not rely on centralized decision making as much as it depends on linkage, coordination, and interaction within a network based on interconnected nodes among governmental institutions, the private sector, civil society, citizens, digital platforms, and electronic service providers. This structure enables it to be distinguished by:

- The open circulation of information.
- Horizontal interaction among actors in place of vertical relationships within the hierarchy of authority.
- Participatory policies to which citizens contribute through digital platforms.¹⁰
- Flexible governance based on real time data and artificial intelligence analysis.
- The multiplicity and diversity of centers of expertise, replacing reliance on a single institutional apparatus.

In light of this approach, the state in its contemporary political conception no longer plays the role of a solitary leader, but has instead become a coordinator within an integrated participatory system aimed at producing and shaping public decision making.

2.2- Mechanisms for Activating the Participatory State: Digital Democracy

To achieve a participatory state grounded in digital democracy, it is necessary to establish means and mechanisms that ensure effective implementation and interaction. These mechanisms include:

- Digital voting: This involves transitioning from the traditional paper based stage to a digital stage that relies on various algorithmic models, through the integration of smart electronic identification cards and digital voting via algorithm based communication gateways. In this regard, numerous successful international experiences exist.¹¹
- Electronic campaigns: Through the use of digital technology in electoral campaigns and cycles, as well as in publicity and advertising.¹²

B) The Role of Technology in Rebuilding Trust in Politics

Trust in political institutions, as the general framework for political practice under democracy, represents one of the challenges facing contemporary political systems. This occurs in light of the widening gap between society, at its various levels, and political actors across their diverse orientations. The transformations associated with modernization and globalization have only intensified, if not weakened, levels of popular trust. This is reflected in political disengagement, declining participation, and the spread of protest discourse.

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In the context of the outcomes of the digital knowledge industry, a genuine possibility has emerged for redefining the relationship between citizens and the political system according to new foundations based on transparency and openness.

1- Electronic Transparency and Digital Popular Oversight

Electronic transparency refers to the use of technology to present information related to government and political orientations in a clear and publicly accessible manner, with the aim of enabling citizens to review decisions, budgets, and services with ease.

The expansion of digital technology use has led to a reengineering of the relationship between citizens and the state. Electronic transparency has thus acquired a central position as a foundation for renewing democratic legitimacy. The use of technological mechanisms has established a new pattern of popular oversight that transcends traditional means and invests in cyberspace as an extension of the public political sphere.

This, in turn, allows for the expansion of participation, reduces the information gap between authority and citizens, and directs efforts toward the creation of effective digital citizenship.¹³

Digital popular oversight refers to citizens' use of digital tools to monitor and follow governmental performance, transforming their role from passive to active through participation in evaluation and critique.

The relationship between the two is reflected in the fact that electronic transparency provides information, whereas digital popular oversight uses that information for accountability. The absence of transparency leads to the absence of effective oversight, while the absence of oversight deprives transparency of its value.

2- Enhancing Accountability through Interactive Digital Media

The transition from traditional administration to digital governance has led to the emergence of new patterns of accountability based on real time interaction, open transparency, and societal participation. Accountability is no longer confined to classical institutional mechanisms but has come to rely on interactive digital tools such as electronic platforms, smart applications, and open data dashboards.

Digital accountability refers to the obligation of public or private entities to justify their decisions and actions through digital media, with the possibility of monitoring them by citizens or oversight bodies.

Interactive digital media have produced a significant qualitative transformation in the mechanisms of political accountability, shifting from slow traditional channels to interactive digital spaces that provide citizens with direct tools for expression, monitoring, and influence over decision making, thereby shaping effective citizenship.¹⁴

With the development of social media platforms and government electronic services, accountability has become a participatory process based on the flow of information in real

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time and on immediate interaction between the citizen and the institution. This has contributed to the consolidation of a new oversight pattern grounded in horizontal monitoring through digital media alongside institutional oversight, under the designation of digital accountability.¹⁵

Interactive digital media represent a qualitative transformation in the concept of accountability, as it is no longer merely a traditional oversight mechanism but has become a dynamic interactive system based on participation, transparency, and continuous monitoring. However, its effectiveness remains contingent upon the availability of:

- An appropriate legal environment
- Advanced digital infrastructure
- An institutional culture grounded in transparency

The future of accountability in the digital age is moving toward an intelligent participatory model that redistributes oversight authority between the state and society.

Section II: Toward a Legal Framework to Ensure Digital Democratic Legitimacy

The transition toward digital democracy is among the necessities of technological transformation in the public sphere, patterns of political participation, and methods of public decision making. Despite its promise of building transparency, participation, and effective accountability, it encounters a complex challenge related to regulating digital practice within this democratic model in light of the need to protect political rights while ensuring a balance of power in the digital environment.

Accordingly, the establishment of a comprehensive legal framework has become of great importance for ensuring the legitimacy of the transition and for subjecting modern democratic practice to the principles of the rule of law, which constitute the fundamental objective of transformation in the state and its various practices across different fields.

A) The Legal Framework Between Foundations and Sources:

Democratic legitimacy in the digital age cannot be built merely on the availability of technological tools. Rather, it must be surrounded by a legislative system that protects digital freedom of expression, safeguards the right to privacy, regulates circulation, provides mechanisms for digital accountability, and adapts to new models of participation.¹⁶ The legislative framework of digital democracy must constitute a comprehensive and distinctive model that protects rights and freedoms, regulates digital practices, and ensures the integrity of electronic political processes, thereby consolidating the legitimacy of technological democracy and explaining the harmony between digital innovation and constitutional guarantees.

1- Foundations of the Legal Framework of Digital Democracy

The construction of a legislative framework for digital democracy constitutes a fundamental step toward ensuring the legitimacy of technological transformation in the

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political sphere. This necessitates a return to the process of foundational grounding that determines the theoretical and value based principles of this framework. Such grounding is based on placing constitutional and legal principles governing digital practice into consideration and activation, so that they form supreme reference principles upon which all subsequent legislation is built. Accordingly, digital democracy cannot operate outside the boundaries and logic of the rule of law. Rather, it must be subject to integrated institutional regulation that ensures and guarantees the prevention of information disorder and digital dominance. These foundational principles may be summarized as follows.

1.1- Respect for Rights and Freedoms:

Respect for rights and freedoms constitutes one of the fundamental pillars upon which any democratic legal system is based, as it reflects the extent of the state's commitment to protecting human dignity and guaranteeing the exercise of fundamental rights without discrimination or arbitrariness. Various international instruments, foremost among them the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, have enshrined the principle of respect for rights and freedoms as a cornerstone in building a society governed by justice, equality, and the rule of law.

In light of the rapid transformations witnessed by the world, particularly with the spread of digital technology and interactive media, new challenges have emerged regarding the protection of these rights, whether related to the right to privacy, freedom of expression, or the right of access to information. While the digital environment has provided unprecedented opportunities to enhance participation and transparency, it has also generated risks related to violations of rights and freedoms, such as digital surveillance, media misinformation, and the exploitation of personal data.

From this perspective, respect for rights and freedoms is no longer merely a traditional legal obligation. It now requires a modern approach that takes into account the balance between the requirements of digital security and the guarantees of individual freedom. This necessitates the development of legal and regulatory frameworks capable of keeping pace with this transformation and strengthening oversight and accountability mechanisms to prevent the abuse of power, whether traditional or algorithmic.

1.2- Ensuring Political Participation

The core foundation of democratic systems depends on political participation because citizens gain the ability to shape public decisions and public policies through their involvement in the process. The state demonstrates its respect for public desires through citizen involvement, which strengthens the core principle of popular sovereignty that serves as the foundation for contemporary political authority.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights stands as the primary international document which grants all people the right to take part in public affairs through their right to vote, their ability to run for office, and their power to join public discussions. The right stands as a natural development which stems from first amendment rights that include free speech, association rights, organization rights, and association rights.

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The fast digital changes have created a new political participation style because people now use their digital rights to participate through social media platforms, digital voting systems, and political campaign activities. These tools have made it possible for more people to participate while giving power to groups which used to be excluded from decision-making processes. Especially young people.

The digital transformation process generates multiple problems which include the digital divide, the spread of false information, the unequal power of digital platforms, and the threat of algorithm-based public opinion control. The political process requires legal and regulatory systems which defend voter preferences through election system protection.

Ensuring political participation is therefore no longer limited to providing traditional mechanisms, but now requires the creation of a secure and equitable digital environment that promotes informed and responsible civic engagement and guarantees a balance between freedom of expression and the integrity of the democratic process, thereby consolidating the principles of good governance and strengthening trust between citizens and state institutions.

1.3- Protection of Privacy

Privacy protection stands as a basic right which defends human dignity while maintaining private life because it allows people to decide how their personal data will be disclosed. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, together with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, have established worldwide recognition for this right which protects people from random interference with their private life and their communication.

The digital revolution has introduced fresh challenges to privacy because modern technology enables people to gather and manage vast amounts of information, which has created complicated privacy problems. Organizations and governments now use personal data as a strategic resource which drives their decision-making processes. This practice leads to growing threats of privacy breaches through digital monitoring and unauthorized data access, and unapproved use of personal information for business and political activities.

The present situation needs a fresh understanding of "digital privacy" which surpasses standard protection methods to grant users authority over their data and their right to erase information and clear disclosure about algorithm operations. The digital age requires organizations to build advanced legal systems, which include the General Data Protection Regulation as a leading example for personal data protection and digital rights enhancement.

The protection of privacy stands as a challenging issue because digital security needs to be balanced with technological progress and individual rights protection. The defense of this right needs a full approach which brings together strong laws with proper institutional monitoring and public education to defend it against the fast-moving information flow that exists in society.

The digital era needs privacy protection to serve as its fundamental requirement because it protects human rights and freedoms while building digital trust and supporting proper governance systems.

1.4- The Rule of Law in Cyberspace

The rule of law is one of the fundamental principles upon which the modern state is based. It implies that all individuals and public authorities are subject to the provisions of the law, thereby ensuring justice and the protection of rights and freedoms. With technological development and the emergence of cyberspace as a new domain for human interaction, the need has arisen to reformulate this principle in a manner consistent with the distinctive characteristics of the digital world.

The widespread expansion of the internet and digital technologies has created a borderless environment characterized by speed and complexity, which has made the application of traditional legal rules face unprecedented challenges. It has therefore become necessary to develop the concept of "digital rule of law" to ensure that online activities, whether related to individuals, companies, or governments, are subject to a clear and effective legal framework.

Numerous international initiatives, such as those of the United Nations, have emphasized the need to strengthen the rule of law in cyberspace through the establishment of legal rules governing the use of technology, safeguarding digital rights, and ensuring accountability for unlawful online actions. This also includes combating cybercrime, regulating data use, and ensuring cybersecurity.

1.5- Sources of Legislative Texts for Digital Democracy

The legal framework of digital democracy is based on a diverse and multi level legislative system.¹⁷ It begins with constitutional provisions that establish the right to participation, expression, and access to information, followed by legislation related to electronic electoral processes, data protection, cybercrime, and digital governance, extending to regulatory measures issued by competent administrative authorities to facilitate digital services and platforms, in addition to international standards derived from conventions.¹⁸

Judicial interpretation also constitutes a source through its role in clarifying the boundaries between freedom and regulation in the digital sphere.

B) Legal Guarantees of Digital Democracy

For digital democracy to function effectively and productively, its legal framework must include a set of guarantees. Electronic democratic processes have become closely linked to the ability of the legal framework to ensure integrity and transparency.

The adoption of technology in the political sphere does not in itself ensure credibility. Rather, it requires a rigorous legal system providing multiple safeguards that protect against manipulation, intrusion, unlawful direction, and external influence.

The first guarantee lies in cybersecurity, which forms the technical legal foundation for the stability of the electronic democratic process. Relevant legislation requires the protection of voter and political actor databases, the security of digital platforms, and the integrity of

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voting and counting algorithms. Digital identity verification also represents one of the most important conditions for integrity, as the law must ensure that each user participating in voting or engagement is legally eligible through mechanisms such as electronic signatures and supervised stored data.

Digital transparency constitutes a central pillar, requiring the publication of information related to the algorithms used, among other elements, thereby contributing to trust building and enabling oversight bodies and civil society to evaluate the process.

Legal provisions also guarantee equality of digital access by addressing the digital divide that leads to the exclusion of certain groups, thereby reinforcing the constitutional guarantee of political participation.

Legislative texts also ensure a set of deterrent and supervisory safeguards, such as the criminalization of external interference, the establishment of mechanisms for electronic auditing, and the prevention of manipulation of political digital data and content.¹⁹

Independent electoral bodies operate in accordance with the law as regulatory authorities supervising the implementation of these guarantees in line with governance and quality standards.

Conclusion:

As a general outcome of this research paper, it can be stated that the future of political legitimacy is moving toward the construction of a dual model that combines the essence of representative democracy with the achievements of digital democracy, in which technology constitutes a tool for enhancing participation rather than replacing traditional institutions.

The success of this transition remains contingent upon the state's ability to develop flexible legislation that reduces the digital divide and enables citizens to exercise their political role through more modern and interactive means, thereby achieving a new form of legitimacy that is more inclusive and realistic, responsive to contemporary transformations, and aligned with citizens' aspirations for participation based on transparency and accountability.

Study findings:

The study also demonstrated a set of subsidiary findings, the most important of which are:

- Political legitimacy in the digital age stems from digital democracy based on the integration of technology within a political framework that respects constitutional rules, enhances freedoms, and consolidates effective participation.
- The transition toward digital democracy is not a transient technical event but a reformulation of the relationship between the state and society, and a shift from the model of the leading state to the networked state that relies on openness, interaction, and transparency.

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- Despite the capabilities of technology, it is associated with numerous and significant risks that necessitate the existence of a comprehensive legal framework ensuring the integrity of digital processes and protecting political rights.
- The legal framework of digital democracy is the product of interaction between principled foundational grounding and various legal sources that provide the practical basis. Its legitimacy as a framework is achieved only through the coherence and integration of this combination, allowing legal adaptation to the challenges of digitization while simultaneously ensuring the preservation of the essence of democratic legitimacy within its fundamental principles and values in the contemporary rule of law environment.

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