



The Whole-Process People's Democracy in Digital Age: Connotation, Development and Prospect

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Abstract. The emergence and development the Internet and other digital technologies is profoundly shaping our thinking about democratic politics and expanding the possible space for the development of the human race. It is also changing the institutional forms of and our practical approaches to democratic politics. As a new form of democracy in China, the whole-process people's democracy also faces the repercussions from the development of the Internet and other digital technologies. With similar features of other forms of deliberative democracy, the whole-process people's democracy in digital age is distinguished for its broad participation, wide-ranging topics, equal communication and instantaneity. Through digital technologies, the whole-process people's democracy in digital age can link the stakeholders in a diversified space together and then facilitate reasonable decision-making under the circumstance of sufficient information flow, broaden the democracy space by enabling activism of both individuals and organizations, foster democratic values and mentalities among citizens, and improve the supervision on public power. The practice of the whole-process people's democracy in digital age is contingent both on the solution of "how democracy can drive technology" and the macro-level institutional structures that are expected to consistently tap the potential of democracy.

Keywords: The whole-process people's democracy · Digital technology · Institution · governance

1 Introduction

On November 2, 2019, President Xi Jinping inspected the contact point of grassroots legislators in Hongqiao Street, Changning District, Shanghai, he first proposed that "people's democracy is a democracy that covers the whole process". In the draft amendments to the Organic Law of the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China and to the Rules of Procedure for the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China adopted in March 2021, "The whole-process democracy" has been explicitly written into the Organic Law of the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China and to the Rules of Procedure for the National People's Congress of the

People's Republic of China. On July 1, 2021, in his speech at the meeting of Celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the Founding of The Communist Party of China, Xi Jinping, general Secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC), specifically called for "practicing people-centered philosophy of development and developing the whole-process people's democracy", adding the word of "people" into the expression. The whole process people's democracy is not only a new expression of socialist democracy with Chinese characteristics, but also a new theoretical summary of people's democracy as a workable and practical form. It not only surpasses the western democracy, but also provides a solid discourse power and theoretical support for the development of China's democratic politics.

With the sustained development of Internet, big data, cloud computing and other technologies, China has also entered the digital era. Digital technology not only profoundly shapes people's way of life and thinking, but also influences people's thinking about democratic system. For the development of the whole-process of people's democracy, while digital technology has a positive impact on the expansion of its participants as well as improves the operational efficiency, there are also hidden dangers that lead to vulgarization of democracy and could reinforce elite and narrow political interests. In other words, digital technology can both strengthen and weaken democracy. The future direction of the whole-process of people's democracy in the digital era also depends on the inclusiveness and openness of the macro political system.

2 Connotation of the Whole-Process People's Democracy

The author believes that the political connotation of the whole-process of people's democracy can be understood from the following three key words: "whole", "process" and "people". The key word-"whole" mainly includes the following four aspects: Firstly, the range of democratic participant should be extended. The unbalanced distribution of economic and educational resources has been the biggest social blight in the development process of China for a long time., together with the increasing trend of population aging in China, a large number of "disadvantaged groups" in political and democratic participation will be derived. The whole-process of people's democracy pays special attention to solving the problems thoroughly of channels for the participation of vulnerable and social peripheral groups from institutional and mechanical perspective, and strengthened to safeguard every citizen's right to participate in the deliberation and administration of state affairs.

The second part is the content of public participation should be complete. The whole-process People's Democracy provides solid institutional support for the people to participate in all aspects of public affairs in the country's political and social life as far as possible, from the domestic affairs in life to the discussion of legislation, economic development and other essential matters relate to superstructure.

The third part is the coverage area of democracy should to be complete. From the vertical perspective, a complete democratic participation mechanism should be established from the grass-roots level to the local level and then to the central government. Horizontally, the whole-process of people's democracy should cover all aspects of democratic election, democratic decision-making, democratic management and democratic

supervision. Fourthly, the democratic process should be complete. One of the biggest advantages of the whole-process people's democracy system compared with the democratic systems of western countries lies in the formation of a closed loop in democratic procedures, from democratic participation to the implementation of public policies, the concept of the whole process people's democracy permeates the process.

The biggest drawback of western democracy is that it has narrowed the scope of democracy and simplified it to competitive election. In this way, it will not only greatly limit the development of democracy, weaken its richness, but also cause the tearing of social forces and unable to guarantee the rights and interests of vulnerable groups. The "process" in the whole-process of people's democracy emphasizes a process of cooperative governance. It is a process from democratic decision-making to democratic supervision, a process in which all participants reached a consensus on the premise of consistent fundamental interests, a process which emphasizes the philosophy of co-governance, co-contribution and sharing.

Finally, the "people" in the whole-process of people's democracy refers to relying on masses in every tasks and doing everything for them, carrying out the principle of "from masses to masses" On the one hand, without the participation of the people, as an important subject of democratic participation, democracy will become a tree without roots or water without a source. In addition, the improvement of people's political accomplishment will also promote the development of democratic politics to some degree, as well the perfect whole-process people's democratic system will also become the catalyst for people to continuously improve their ability to participate in and discuss political affairs. On the other hand, the ultimate goal of developing people's democracy is to seek happiness for the Chinese people, and we should always take realizing the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the people as the starting point and foothold of democratic political construction. General Secretary Xi Jinping has stressed that "consultation by all stakeholders is the true meaning to people's democracy." "We need to put in place complete systems, procedures and participatory practices to ensure people's right to extensive, sustained and in-depth participation in their daily political life." The democratic system that does not develop for the fundamental interests of the people is not the ideal democratic system we pursue.

3 The Whole-Process of People's Democracy's Development in the Digital Age

The benign application of digital technology will promote the whole-process of people's democracy to a new development.

3.1 Digital Technology Can Connect the Interest Subjects in the Diverse Space, Reflect the System Advantages of the Whole-Process of People's Democracy

The whole-process of people's democracy is an important feature of China's democratic politics. It has a complete institutional chain and participatory practice, has realized the unity of process democracy and results-based democracy, procedural democracy and essence of democracy, direct democracy and indirect democracy, people's democracy

and the will of the state. Digital technology can also break the time and space restrictions and identity barriers between democratic participants, connecting the government closely with democratic subjects from all aspects, thus expanding the scope and offering the free paths of democratic participation to the participants.

3.2 Digital Technology Can Realize Scientific and Legal Decision-Making Based on Sufficient Information by Virtue of the Expression of Interests of Actors in Cyberspace

Information is the basis of decision-making, carrying the real and special interests demand of individual. The data presented by the Internet may be fragmented public opinion information, while big data and other advanced information technologies can gather scattered public opinion into a systematic, comprehensive and overall reflection of public opinion, thus providing direction for decision-making in the whole-process of people's democracy. What public opinion cares about is what public policy cares about. The benign application of digital technology will undoubtedly provide support for the development of China's whole-process of people's democracy.

3.3 The Whole-Process of People's Democracy with Digital Technology Can Prove a Trend of Equal Opportunities

The democratic spirit contained in it can guide people to gradually develop public and democratic spirit. As mentioned above, the relationship between the development of benign democratic system and the cultivation and promotion of public awareness of democracy are mutually reinforcing and inseparable. While expanding the scope of democratic participants, digital technology will also promote the benign development of democratic practice, and the formation of citizens' democratic literacy and public spirit is more derived from democratic practice. A more progressive democratic system and democratic practice will not only stimulate the willingness of citizens to participate in democracy, but also cultivate the public spirit of understanding, respect, compromise, moderation and collective responsibility. These are necessary for healthy participation in democracy. With the improvement of willingness and quality of the participants, it is also of great benefit to development of the whole-process of people's democracy.

3.4 The Whole-Process of People's Democracy in the Digital Era Can Improve the Visibility and Transparency of the Political Process and Results

The whole-process of people's democracy in the digital era is conducive to the realization of diversified rights supervision. Restricting power by power, restricting power by society and restricting power by media are different options that human beings try to design in political exploration. The supervision and restriction value of the whole-process of people's democracy lies in the construction of modern public administration. The problem of bureaucratic discretion "does not necessarily exist because of administrative power, but because of its democratic practice." The whole-process of people's democracy in the digital era has opened the way to restrict power through the network.

The process of integrating public opinion into power means that the new digital power begins to restrict the autonomy of power. In the digital era, the whole-process of people's democracy's openness and transparent has promoted. Under the influence of multiple constraints, public power should not only regulate its own behavior and act within legal boundaries, but also actively carry out dialogue and discussion with participants, so as to meet the basic requirements of participants in the democratic process, at the same time, it is necessary to timely respond to the various appeals raised by the public in the process of participating in democracy and network, so as to fulfill the responsibilities of power itself.

3.5 The Whole-Process of People's Democracy Will also Release the Vitality of Individuals and Organizations

The whole-process of people's democracy will also release the vitality of individuals and organizations on the new basis of technology, opening up new space and creating possibilities for democratic development. After all, democracy is a human activity, human organization and human will take part in it. Only when individuals and organizations composed of individuals are get rid of various constraints and controls can the vitality and power of democratic political development be stimulated by the free talents and creativity of each individual.

Firstly, digital technology and the Internet promote the equalization of information access and participation, thus changing the power relations between people, between people and organizations, and between organizations. At the same time, it also developed the potential of people's political behavior and enhanced people's interest in political life. Secondly, the interactivity, ubiquitous and multi-modal characteristics of digital media make it surpass traditional media. Finally, whole-process people's democracy in the digital age can effectively improve governance effectiveness. To measure the effectiveness of governance, it is based on whether participation is extensive, consensus is reached, decision-making is scientific, as well as rights and interests are protected. Effectively designed technologies for democratic purposes can drive the political process to open up democratic governance paradigms.

4 The Whole-Process of People's Democracy's Vision of Future in the Digital Age

The whole-process of people's democracy in the digital age retains the universality of our traditional democratic system, but there is also a conflict between instrumental rationality and value rationality brought by digital technology. The development of the whole-process of people's democracy in combination with digital technology will undoubtedly move towards two directions: in the digital era, the combination of individual people will end the trend of power monopoly and make the whole-process of people's democracy truly become people's participation democracy. In addition, the whole-process of people's democracy in the digital era may slide to another direction, that is, those "powerful groups of digital technology" can further strengthen and consolidate their monopoly due to the application of digital technology, while using technology

to exclude more people from all stages of the whole-process of people's democracy. In this way, the digital divide and social gap will continue to expand, and the institutional construction of the whole-process of people's democracy will be reduced to "a vessel that has lost its soul".

In a word, technology is characterized by the objectivity of tools. It can not only connect with citizens to build a more scientific and superior democratic system, but also can connect with special interest groups to consolidate elite and narrow political interests. There is no doubt that we should do our best to guide the whole-process of people's democracy in the digital age to the first aspect. In other words, what we need to talk about in the future is "how democracy can drive technology".

The essential precondition of "democratically driving technology" is that technology must be a valuable design. The benefits of technology will only emerge if it is sincerely in the service of democracy, and if we are stay alert enough to the complexity and negative impact of technology on democracy. In addition, the development prospect of the whole-process of people's democracy in the digital era depends more on the inclusiveness and openness of the political institution. The most fundamental factors affecting the development of the whole-process people's democracy are political power and political system structure, and technology only plays the role of a bridge connecting and communicating in this process.

To sum up, the future vision of the whole-process of people's democracy in the digital age is optimistic, but we should also keep a cautious attitude and pay attention to the parts that put us on high alert in the whole-process of people's democracy.

5 Conclusion

The whole process of people's democracy in the digital era has been shaped by digital technologies. While retaining the characteristics of the original democratic system, it has also produced some new advantages. While paying attention to the development of the whole-process of people's democracy in the digital era, we should also be on guard against the "alienation phenomenon" that causes the digital divide and social gap in the process of its development. To do this, we must seriously consider the proposition of "how democracy can drive technology". The premise to solve this problem is that democracy must be a valuable design. In addition, the development of the whole-process of people's democracy in the digital era also depends on the inclusiveness and openness of the system.

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