


# Chapter 8


## Global Governance, Digital Politics, and Human Rights Protection

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter discusses the development of global governance mechanisms in the area of digital politics, the internet, and artificial intelligence. The first part introduces key concepts and milestones in the development of governance, particularly digital politics. The next section presents a framework for protecting human rights online against the backdrop of two metanarratives. The first one is the tension between the Global North and Global South in establishing global governance and digital politics. The second metanarrative presents the tension between universal and state-centric conceptions of protecting and regulating human rights online. The final section introduces the institutional framework and soft law principles associated with the United Nations' work through the UN Hub for Human Rights and Digital Technology to develop a universal model of digital politics during the Digital Decade (2020s) and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Digitization presents one of the most important challenges in contemporary politics. It is a paradigm that is not automatically associated with post-modernization and the transition to the information society. This means that in different types of societies or political regimes, digitalization can take very different forms, promote or suppress certain aspects or dimensions of digital transformation with different intensity, etc. This diversity poses a major challenge for both theoretical reflection on digital politics and political practice at all levels of governance.

In our analysis, we concentrate on the global level of analysis by focusing primarily on the transformations of the concept and organization of global governance in relation to the challenges of digital politics. We reflect on the mechanisms by which the UN system has integrated various aspects of digital transformation and the threats or challenges they pose. In particular, we focus on digital divide, human-centered digitization and human rights protection issues, including the new digital rights catalogue, and security challenges associated with the use of artificial intelligence.

At the same time, we focus on the geopolitical dimension of digital politics on a global scale. In other words, we examine the conflict between universal and state-centric approaches to digitization. We pay particular attention to analyzing the development of the digital politics regulatory ecosystem within the UN Hub for Human Rights and Digital Technology and the implementation of the UN General Assembly resolution on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of digital technologies.

Finally, we reflect on the tension between global/multilateral and state-centric approaches to digital policy regulation. We discuss the frequent criticism of the global North's dominance in this area and the fact that the region's key actors — the United States and the European Union — are the biggest proponents of multilateralism and opponents of authoritarian digital policies. At the same time, however, we also consider the fact that the traditional division between the West (the Global North) and the 'post-colonial' world has recently been disrupted by two factors: the emergence of China (or rather, Sinocentric international groups) as a rival to the West; and the unilateral approach of the current US administration, which is primarily state-centric and disregards the multilateral dimension.

This transformation is also linked to the growing assertiveness and emancipation of regional powers and governance models in different parts of the Global South. These have developed under different conditions, for different reasons, and also with distinct motivations (Söderbaum, 2004, p. 4). This emancipation and plurality of regional governance models is also linked to the emergence of different models and activities of grassroots digital rights movements and, more generally, civil

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