

Conference

**Digital Transformations in Central
Asia: Current State and New
Perspectives**

16 October 2021, Bishkek
Conference Rapporteur: Rustam Muhamedov

Academy Papers #10

Conference

Digital Transformations in Central Asia: Current State and New Perspectives

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Annual Alumni Conference

Digital Transformations in Central Asia: Current State and New Perspectives

16 October 2021, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

Introduction

On 16-17 October 2021, the Alumni Network of the OSCE Academy in Bishkek organized the Alumni Conference on “Digital Transformations in Central Asia: Current State and New Perspectives.” Central Asian states enthusiastically embrace the digital transformation of the national economies and public services and have already achieved notable breakthroughs in this area. Digital technologies now permeate nearly every aspect of our lives, from shopping to receiving medical services to shaping preferences on societal or political matters. The COVID-19 pandemic only accelerated this process, leading to a skyrocketing number of new online services and platforms. The pandemic also unveiled the persistence of notable challenges that prevent the regional economies and people from reaping the full spectrum of benefits offered by the digital world.

Through a series of panel discussions, the conference aimed to scholarly and critically inquire into how digitalization processes have transformed societal norms and relations and economic and political developments in the region. The conference discussions covered a wide range of issues reflecting the multifaceted and complex nature of digital transformation, including topics such as security, the role of the outside powers, inclusive and sustainable development, education, youth and women, political and economic mobilization, advancement and protection of human rights and freedoms, and reinvention of public services delivery. The conference also offered an opportunity to reflect on the long-standing challenges and impeding factors of meaningful development in the region from a new angle.

The conference participants, more than 30 alumni, were welcomed by Dr. Alexander Wolters, Director of the OSCE Academy, and Ambassador Alexey Rogov, Head of the OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek. The event was opened by honorable guests from the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO) Dr. Vladimir Morozov, Vice-Rector for Human Resources, Associate Professor, and Prof. Elina Sidorenko, Director of the Center for Digital Economy and Financial Innovation. Dr. Morozov spoke on international cooperation in higher education, the MGIMO experience and outlined the plans for collaboration between the OSCE Academy and MGIMO. Prof. Sidorenko delivered a Keynote speech on “Development of Law in the Context of Digital Transformation.”

The conference continued with three panels covering digitalization in the state, economy, and human rights and values. Moderators of the panels were experts in this field in Kyrgyzstan: Dr. Nuria Kutnaeva, Director and Founder of the Public Foundation

“DigitalTechnology Foundation,” Dr. Zhyldyz Tegizbekova, Associate Professor at AlaToo International University (Kyrgyzstan) and Teaching Professor at KAZGUU University (Kazakhstan), and Talant Sultanov, Chair and Co-Founder of the Kyrgyz Internet Society (Kyrgyzstan). The panel discussions were followed by an interactive session of questions and answers with all participants. The discussions also explored key recommendations and possible ways forward.

On October 17, participants attended the basics of cross-cultural communication session coordinated by Cross-Cultural Communication expert Julia Johannsen and discussed different concepts of culture at an eco-resort in the mountains. The conference concluded with teambuilding and network activities.

The conference was generously funded by the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI).

Keynote Speech by Dr. Elina Sidorenko: “Development of Law in the Context of Digital Transformation”

Dr. Elina Sidorenko’s speech focused on three main themes: the major international trends and their challenges in digitalization, the theoretical basis to legal regulation of digitalization, and the latest issues in the legal regulation of digital technologies.

Dr. Sidorenko commenced her speech by outlining the main developments in the area of digitalization, such as robotics, artificial intelligence, the Internet of things, cloud computing, big data, and others, and discussing their application in various fields, including in healthcare, education, environmental protection, finances and banking. The application of these technologies has a significant positive impact by making services cheaper and more accessible, faster, and more reliable. At the same time, major technological breakthroughs also lead to the emergence of new challenges and security threats, requiring a new course of preventive and responsive action. For instance, as data centers are becoming an important critical infrastructure worldwide, the need for an adequate legal framework regulating the collection and use of big data at the international level increases. Similarly, cloud services also require an adequate legal framework in light of an increasing number of data leakages from such sources in recent years amidst the growing number of active Internet users every year.

Dr. Sidorenko also discussed how digitalization reshapes the labor market both positively and negatively. Digitalization adds to the active diversification and redistribution of labor resources; this process, however, has its drawbacks. For instance, while digitalization brings the immense potential to improve social outcomes for women, a significant digital gender

gap remains, which threatens to perpetuate existing patterns of disparities. Digitalization also poses the threat of causing a new wave of global unemployment as technological advancements bear the potential of eliminating around 20 percent of the traditional labor in the following decade. More efforts need to be invested in developing a wide range of new skills and knowledge to address these issues, which requires decisive actions in reforming the education system, training, professional development, significant human resources, and financial capacities channeled into these spheres. Digital education can also become a new field for cooperation that can decrease the digital divide between the developed and developing nations and ensure greater resilience against new threats and challenges.

In the legal domain, Dr. Sidorenko explained different approaches to regulating digitalization and informed the audience about the novel issues in this field that spur scholarly and practical debates, substantiating her presentation with real-life examples from across the globe. For instance, the debates surrounding granting legal capacity to robots and artificial intelligence were examined through the example of Arizona laws that grant AI technology the rights and duties of pedestrians. Protection of personal data of smartphone users was also brought to the attention of the audience, considering the legal developments in this sphere. In this vein, the blind spots of the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) were identified, namely related to regulating the use of the Internet of things, smart home devices, use of cloud technologies (exchange of data), big data. Similarly, the implications resulting from the lack of adequate information exchange regarding criminal investigations between countries and the lack of full legal protection against the unlawful use of drones invading the privacy of landowners were also presented.

Dr. Sidorenko, at the end of her speech, emphasized the crucial role of the OSCE, its cooperative instruments, and the work of its field missions in supporting Central Asian states in harnessing the positive potential of digital technologies and strengthening their resilience capacity against the new challenges and threats to the wellbeing of local societies and their sustainable development. Dr. Sidorenko's speech invited lively and engaging discussion in the audience. One of the participants was curious about the implications of the states' increasing capabilities in tracking their citizens, as was the case during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was noted that states are beginning to find the right balance between safeguarding public safety, ensuring national security, and protecting personal rights and freedoms. It was stressed that such developments' fast-paced and complex nature requires careful examination, and no single model can be singled out to be copied by all states. The participants also discussed the role of IT giants in influencing the global processes of digitalization, the positive and negative impacts of their activities. It was noted that transnational IT companies pose a considerable challenge as they store vast amounts of personal data, which can also be misused. Furthermore, as these companies

set their own rules of conduct and provide distinct insurance mechanisms, they create legal challenges by sowing discrepancies between national law and their regulations, thus, making it difficult to hold them accountable in case of violations.

Digitalization is a complex and multifaceted process that bears immense positive potential and generates new challenges, threats, and other negative externalities. As this process is reshaping the global political, socio-economic, and security landscapes, governments across the globe are stepping up their efforts to mitigate the adverse effects of digital transformation and better use its transformative capacity for the benefit of their people. In light of this, the role of multilateral platforms, such as the OSCE, which aim to strengthen cooperation and dialogue between states, can become a decisive factor in ensuring the elaboration of policy actions that will make digital transformation work for growth and wellbeing.

Panel 1. Digital Transformation and State

The current pace of the digital revolution urges governments across the globe to rethink the way they deliver services to their citizens and embrace the use of new technologies to address local, national, and regional problems. Hence, the new technologies offer the profound potential for governments to deliver better outcomes to their citizens. While all five Central Asian states have embraced the digital agenda, how well do they fare in overcoming the «digital disconnect»? The panel examined this issue by looking into how sound Central Asian states perform in developing the right policies, spurring innovation, and building requisite infrastructure to enable a thriving digital economy and society at the national level. It also examined the main challenges and how different actors, including outside powers, influence these processes and other related questions.

Two speakers of the panel examined these developments in the context of Kyrgyzstan. One of the speakers assessed Kyrgyzstan's overall digital maturity, also examining the functioning of the country's interoperable information system, Tunduk, by using the e-Governance Academy's digital maturity assessment tool. Kyrgyzstan has recorded notable progress in this area as Tunduk (based on the Estonian prototype «X-Road») interconnects information systems of both the state and business sector, including the Portal of e-services, digital procurement system, e-payment tool, or mobile operators' systems. The platform's development and use led to the reduction of paper documentation, greater transparency and accountability, and increased cash inflow into the state budget. Notably, the number of transactions has been steadily increasing from zero in 2018 to reach 179 million in 2021, which also encouraged the government to launch a mobile application for the e-services platform. Notwithstanding the progress, there are a number of issues that

require state action. The state needs to address the digital divide, particularly between the urban and rural areas, reform the education system that should focus on nurturing the requisite skills. It also needs to foster STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education for girls to reduce gender inequality, improve cybersecurity and data protection, and fix sandboxes in legal frameworks, specifically the legal discrepancies and delayed adoption of relevant laws.

The second speaker on Kyrgyzstan examined the implementation of a “smart” city project in the capital city - Bishkek. Kyrgyzstan launched several “smart” city initiatives, the first one in 2012, aimed to improve public safety, reduce bureaucratic barriers, and decrease corruption. Nonetheless, as the speaker underlined, the project implementation became an instrument of virtual/symbolic politics as the rhetoric of digital development has been used for image building by political actors motivated by attracting foreign capital. The rhetoric was particularly topical during important events in the country’s political life, i.e., prior to national elections. Furthermore, Kyrgyzstan fell short of reshaping and optimizing the traditional system of city management, which is a crucial element of the implementation of a meaningful “smart” city project. The process was also strongly undermined by the lack of clear strategic vision, frequent political perturbations, corruption scandals under different authorities regarding the tender competition, and lack of domestic financial resources. Consequently, this led to ambivalent results and impaired initiative effectiveness as significant challenges remain, such as the lack of cohesive information coverage, insufficient funding, and underdeveloped mechanisms for levying fines. Moreover, there is a danger that the progress may be reversed, considering continuing corruption scandals and judicial proceedings.

Central Asian countries’ cybersecurity progress and the role of outside powers in these developments were the focus of another speaker’s discussion. It was noted that while Central Asian states have recorded notable advances in the cybersecurity field, genuine progress has still been undermined by the aggressive, non-transparent, and state-centric digitalization strategies. As such an approach focuses on the rapid attainment of positive quantitative benchmarks and immediate benefits, it impairs the development of a healthy and sustainable local digital culture. In the cybersecurity field, regional states are focused on improving the resilience of critical infrastructure and utilizing modern technologies to benefit ruling elites, namely to have complete control over the information flow within their borders to curb unwanted dissent. Consequently, this approach puts the citizens at risk of falling prey to malicious agents as their poor digital literacy skills and cyber hygiene practices remain unimproved. Furthermore, the urge for fast and easy fix digital solutions risks compromising Central Asian states’ digital sovereignty by making them dependent on China’s and Russia’s technology, considering the latter’s self-serving geopolitical interests.

The regional elites have already developed hybrid cybersecurity systems that combine Russia's lower-tech filtering approach and Chinese intrusive technologies. Considering these developments, the speaker argued that Central Asian states need to diversify their cybersecurity partnerships and embrace a multi-stakeholder approach, suggesting for the European Union to become such a counter-balancing actor. While the relations between the region and the EU were given a new impetus, cooperation in the cybersecurity field remains minimal. It is likely to remain such, considering the regional elites' interest to preserve the status quo.

One speaker discussed the role of telecommunication companies in state digitalization processes in the context of Kazakhstan. He examined the role of Kazakhtelecom in contributing to Kazakhstan's digital development, outlining its former and current projects, such as the introduction of the Smart City technologies based on LoRaWan and deployment of 5G standard networks. The company also improved fiber-optic communication lines across the country, expanded broadband Internet access in rural areas, and developed a wide range of B2B (business-to-business) and B2G (business-to-government) services, including data transmission, cloud services, virtual firewall, and others. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the company offered new digital tools designed to contain the spread of the disease. For instance, it designed the tools to monitor compliance with quarantine measures in public places, such as connecting selected medical facilities in Karaganda and public buses in Almaty and Kokshetau to a video analytics platform. Also, Kazakhtelecom and the city council of Nur-Sultan agreed to digitize the medical sector in the capital.

Panel 2. Digital Transformation and Human Rights & Values

The rapid expansion of digital technology ushered in a period of profound societal change and disruption. While the new technologies have proven to be an indispensable tool for realizing and protecting a range of human rights and freedoms, there is an increasing concern about how these same technologies deeply challenge our understanding of how to protect and respect human rights. One of the panelists suggested that it is time to talk about the new generation of human rights. It was noted that certain technological advancements, such as artificial intelligence, nano-, and biotechnology, pose an array of critical questions, including ethical ones. Several issues were examined and discussed from this perspective, such as the issue of granting citizenship and civil rights to AI-enhanced robots, the responsibilities for the use of robotic surgery or 3D printed body parts, technologically-enhanced genetic experiments on unborn, the use of augmented reality in education, and others. The existing legal discrepancies and loopholes on the national level, the rethinking of human identity on the Internet and protection of personal data and consumer rights, the balance between various rights in the digital domain as

well as the digital rights' attachment to the existing human rights instruments were also brought into focus.

One of the speakers explored how digital technologies impact international organizations' human rights protection work in the context of epistemic rights. Epistemic rights are defined as those that justify the performance and prohibition of actions and omissions concerning epistemic goods (i.e., knowledge, truth). The ambitious research (currently ongoing) scrutinizes 82 most well-known sources that systematically deliver measures of epistemic rights internationally or across the regions to see how human rights projects are adjusted to new digital context, considering that more activities are being captured as online data. The research focuses on international organizations as they remain the leading actors on the human rights market, which produce, use, and set up standards for measuring human rights fulfillment indicators. As these organizations shape the international human rights regimes, the research findings will help explore trends, discourses, and impacts, identify how approaches contradict or overlap, outline their strengths and limitations. The research findings would also help better understand the modern state of the rights indicators, their makers, and their audiences and contribute to discussions on how digital technologies can define the objectives and platforms for international organizations to compete for resources and power.

The panel continued with two speakers presenting their joint research investigating commonalities and divergencies in privacy interpretations and practices of various actors (state, civil society, and general public) in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. On the governmental level, it was noted that Kyrgyzstan lacks a comprehensive approach to privacy, which receives only honorary mentions, as the government lacks sufficient resources. Kazakhstan, in this regard, is more resourceful and promotes a more authoritarian and technocratic approach based on the modernization and securitization agenda. It was also underlined that in Kazakhstan, governmental agencies often seek support from citizens and civil society to justify initiatives that face resistance from other agencies, as is the case with privacy-related matters, the process the researchers identify as "authoritarian bargaining." While Kazakhstan's civil society groups are systematically weakened and are often instrumentalized in the aforementioned inter-agency competition for policy legitimization, Kyrgyzstan's civil society sector is more independent, vibrant, and involved in this area. However, its effectiveness is hindered by limited resourcefulness, including knowledge limitations (lack of cyber expertise). Finally, on the individual level, speakers identified that the public in Kazakhstan holds a mixed view of suspicion towards the state and fatalism regarding their private data. In contrast, the public in Kyrgyzstan is reluctant to protect their privacy and is eager to give information about themselves to the state, i.e., under the pretext of ensuring security.

Two speakers discussed the interplay between the state and the citizens' use of social media platforms for societal and political mobilization in the context of Uzbekistan. One of the speakers examined the extent to which the current leadership of Uzbekistan lives up to its rhetorical promises of allowing bloggers and journalists to discuss political and societal issues uncensored. Using Toepfl's three types of publics in authoritarian settings (uncritical, policy-critical, leadership-critical publics) as a theoretical framework, the panelist proposed the fourth type for Uzbekistan's case, identified as citizen-critical publics – cases where citizens criticize other citizens as long as the latter are not connected to the ruling elites in any way. It was underlined that while some progress has been made in the country in terms of internet access and its affordability to the public, old habits of the government remained. The state maintains control over the domestic narrative as certain contents and platforms are blocked with occasional interruptions. The government also continues to censor, intimidate, arrest, and apply other forms of pressure on those activists that are too vocal about the top leadership's misconduct and corrupt practices or express views alternative to the state's official position on publicly sensitive topics, such as decriminalization of same-sex sexual conduct. Simultaneously, Uzbekistan's political leadership allows certain controversial online content, such as promoting religious (i.e., photos of children praying, conversion of ethnic minorities to Islam), conservative, patriarchal, or “decaying West” narratives to circulate freely. On a positive note, there is a recorded surge of non-critical channels engaging in charity-focused initiatives that promote good deeds, help, and solidarity campaigns.

The other speaker focused on online platforms' effectiveness as a mass mobilization tool for political action in Uzbekistan. While there is an identified challenge of estimating the extent of commitments of online activists, there are examples of social media platforms' meaningful impact on political processes, such as in Tunisia (Arab Spring) and Belarus (2020). Focusing on the case of Hidirnazar Allaqulov, the panelist argued that YouTube largely failed as an effective tool for mass mobilization in Uzbekistan as the government has developed strategies to deal with social media to curb its potential political impact. Allaqulov initiated an alternative Truth and Development Social Democratic Party and used YouTube as the main information channel, considering its popularity among the citizens. The politician used the channels and platforms of bloggers and foreign media (i.e., Voice of America, BBC Uzbek) to expand his popularity as an alternative candidate. Despite these attempts, he failed to gain the required number of endorsements to run for the elections as the government used the bloggers and government agencies, including clerics, to discredit Allaqulov and intimidate his supporters.

Panel 3. Digital Transformation and the Economy

The digitalization of the national economies is universally welcomed by all five Central Asian states as the regional governments strive for economic diversification, modernization, spreading prosperity through GDP growth, and thus, upgrading living standards and reducing poverty and inequality. The third panel looked into how digital technologies can be utilized for sustainable and inclusive development and how businesses can rethink operating models and become more agile in their ability to respond more effectively to market changes, maximizing value to customers.

One speaker explored the challenges and opportunities of digital transformation in the context of Kyrgyzstan. It was noted that Central Asian countries, including Kyrgyzstan, still lag behind in ensuring good digital connectivity, especially in rural and remote areas, which hinders inclusive and sustainable growth. Furthermore, Internet connection in the region is still of poor quality and costly for most of the population. These trends explain the regional countries' poor performance in various indices measuring the proliferation of digital technologies in various sectors, including public governance (i.e., UN E-government Development Index, E-Participation Index). Several crucial challenges were discussed in greater detail, such as the lack of infrastructure in rural and hard-to-reach areas, lack of content and relevant skills, lack of adequate privacy and personal data protection norms, lack of financial resources, including at the household level. It was highlighted, for instance, that only 0.6 % of the poor households in Kyrgyzstan have computers or other devices. The panelist also discussed possible solutions to existing challenges and ways forward. In this regard, the success of Kyrgyzstan's Internet Society Ilimbox projects that provided the digital educational resource to remote schools that do not have internet connection was brought into focus. Ilimbox, which includes a digital library of Kyrgyz-language electronic books and Wikipedia pages, helped students continue their studies despite disruptions to the traditional curricula caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The speaker also discussed several other proposals that can expand digital connectivity and reduce the digital divide, such as pursuing dig once policy, which allows easier and cheaper installation of fiber, encouraging infrastructure sharing, supporting bottom-up initiatives, establishing more effective ways of spectrum management, and developing a more competitive telecommunications market.

Another speaker discussed the transformation of Kazakhstan's Kaspi.kz from an uninspiring and conventional bank into an ambitious and innovative fintech company. Kaspi launched its "super" app in 2017, which became very successful and evolved into the central delivery mechanism for all bank services. In 2020, there was a recorded growth of digital transformations in Kazakhstan's second-tier banks; these entities, namely Jusan, Forte, and Halyk, became eager to emulate Kaspi's success to expand their market outreach and

maximize profits. Kaspi's emphasis on customer experience and satisfaction resulted in Kaspi becoming Kazakhstan's leading bank with a capitalization of around 21 billion USD and a 9 million strong client base, which constitutes almost half of the country's population. The company's ecosystem consists of four main modules: payment, marketplace, fintech, and services, which allow users to purchase or pay for a wide variety of goods and services. Furthermore, Kaspi actively collaborated with the government during the pandemic, integrating the latter's e-gov elements into its ecosystem, which allowed Kaspi to become the number one wallet to receive state social payments. The available e-government services are expanding in Kaspi's ecosystem, resulting in 3.4 million active Kaspi customers using such services via the app. The company's success provides a compelling case of how the businesses can reinvent themselves and gain a competitive advantage by embarking on a process of innovation rooted in improving customer experience and delivering added value to its services.

Conclusion

In sum, the speakers and panelists of the conference shared the view that governance of the digital sphere has become central for shaping our future, given the increasing role digitalization plays in all aspects of our lives. The increased reliance on digital technologies during the COVID-19 pandemic underscores the need to draw lessons for what lies ahead in the continuous transformation of our societies and economies. The conference critically examined some of the most pressing challenges, aspects, and ways the digital transformation in the region can trigger developments of the autocratic and democratic kind that can fundamentally alter state-societal relations. While promising progress has been achieved, the countries of the region still have a long way to go to ensure inclusive and meaningful digital access for all, requiring addressing the root causes of the region's poor connectivity. Similarly, the regional countries need to improve policies to protect citizens' rights in the digital realm and strengthen their confidence in the use of digital technology. On an international level, the countries of Central Asia need to reconsider their ties with key partners to maximize the benefits of cooperation offered and minimize the potential drawbacks. The participants noted that these discussions reflect only a snapshot in time of a rapidly changing landscape. Further studies will be necessary to keep abreast of the state of digital development in Central Asia. Nevertheless, the conference succeeded in improving collective understanding of the challenges and opportunities of the development of cyberspace presently confronting the region.

Conference Programme

Chronological List of Participants

Venue: OSCE Academy in Bishkek and Zoom Webinar


9:45	Arrival and Registration
10:00 – 10:25	Opening Remarks Dr. Alexander Wolters, Director, OSCE Academy in Bishkek Ambassador Alexey Rogov, Head of the OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek Dr. Vladimir Morozov, Vice-Rector for Human Resources, Associate Professor, MGIMO
10:25 – 11:05	Keynote Speech: ‘Development of Law in the Context of Digital Transformation’ Prof. Elina Sidorenko, Director of Center for Digital Economy and Financial Innovation, MGIMO
11:05 – 11:15	Group photo
11:15 – 11:35	Coffee break
11:15 – 11:35 Panel 1: Digital Transformation and State	
Moderator: Nuria Kutnaeva’05, Kyrgyzstan, Director and Founder of the Public Foundation «Digital Technology Foundation», Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan	
11:35	<i>Opening by Moderator: ‘Digitalization in Central Asia: The Case of the Kyrgyz Republic’</i>
11:55	‘EU-Central Asia: The Way forward towards Resilient and Secure Cyberspace in Central Asia,’ Independent Researcher, Nur- Sultan, Kazakhstan
12:10	‘State Digital Transformation and Role of Telecom Companies,’ Danat Tumabayev’17, Kazakhstan, Senior Business Analyst at JSC «Kazakhtelecom,» Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan

12:25	<p>‘Smart City» Project Realization in Kyrgyzstan: Instrument of Virtual Politics or Providing Citizens’ Security,’</p> <p>Nadezhda Tatkalo’19, Kyrgyzstan, Institute for Strategic Analysis and Forecast at Kyrgyz-Russian Slavic University, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan</p>
12:40	Discussion
13:05 – 14:05	Lunch
14:15 – 16:05 Panel 2: Digital Transformation and Human Rights & Values	
Moderator: Zhyldyz Tegizbekova, Associate Professor, AlaToo International University, Kyrgyzstan; Teaching Professor, KAZGUU University, Kazakhstan	
14:15	Opening by Moderator: ‘Digital Rights — New Generation of Human Rights.’
14:35	<p>‘The Right to Know: a Review of Epistemic Rights Indicators across Institutional Regimes,’</p> <p>Irina Grigor ’06, Kyrgyzstan, (PhD), Postdoctoral Researcher at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Media and Communication Studies, University of Helsinki, Finland</p>
14:50	<p>Privacy.net: Investigating Privacy in Interpretations and Practices in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan,’</p> <p>Malika Toqmadi’ 12, Kazakhstan, PhD candidate, University College, London, UK and Natalia Zakharchenko’ 12, Kyrgyzstan, PhD candidate, Ruhr University Bochum/Vrije University Amsterdam, the Netherlands</p>
15:05	<p>‘Repression of Online Self-Expression in Uzbekistan: Old Habits Applied to New Platforms’ (online),</p> <p>Rashid Gabdulhakov’13, Uzbekistan, PhD. Assistant Professor at the Centre for Media and Journalism Studies, University of Groningen, the Netherlands</p>
15:20	<p>‘(In)efficient Slacktivism: Establishing Opposition Political Party in Uzbekistan,’</p> <p>Akmaljon Abdullayev’05, Uzbekistan, PhD Candidate, University of World Economy and Diplomacy, EU Marie Curie Rise Project Researcher at TalTech, Tallinn, Estonia</p>
15:35	Discussion
16:05 – 16:25	Coffee Break

16:25 – 17:55 Panel 3: Digital Transformation and Economy

**Moderator: Talant Sultanov, Chair and Co-Founder, Kyrgyz Internet Society,
Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan**

16:25	Opening by Moderator: 'Digital Development in Central Asia: Challenges and Opportunities.'
16:45	'Kaspi.kz: Fintech Unicorn from Central Asia. Overview,' Daniel Dushmanov' 16, Kazakhstan, Communications Consultant at the Aerospace Committee of Kazakhstan
17:00	Discussion
17:25	End of the Conference



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