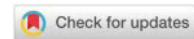


THE DIGITAL MINISTRY IN THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA – POLITICAL CONTROVERSIES AND ECONOMIC MOTIVES

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Abstract: The unusual announcement by Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama regarding the establishment of an executive branch featuring an “artificial minister” soon became official with the formation of Albania’s new government in September 2025. This visionary idea inspired research into the socio-economic rationale, legal-technical feasibility, and political implications of a virtual form of governance. The development dynamics of advanced generations of artificial intelligence should not be ignored; rather, they should be analyzed as products of imaginative engineering. The main intention of the authors of this paper is focused on evaluating both the initial motivations for starting the process of digitizing public administration in the Republic of Albania and the rational elements of political resistance to the implementation of these innovations, taking into account, above all, the complex normative assumptions of its unhindered existence in legal life. The methodological framework of this paper begins with a dogmatic-normative analysis of the initial case and subsequently applies axiological and sociological research instruments. Through a joint effort, the authors explore the potential prospects of such technological intervention in the sphere of state administration, assuming that the idea of an automated government might one day become reality. A retrospective glance at the late 20th and early 21st centuries, marked by the rapid growth of modern technologies, reminds us that societies must be prepared for the challenges these innovations bring. The complacent expectation that such a future lies far ahead - and therefore merits little attention - reflects a broader unwillingness to face change and a latent fear of the unknown.

Keywords: *artificial intelligence, state governance, public procurement, legitimacy, democracy.*

Field: Social Sciences

1. INTRODUCTION

Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama introduced the idea of establishing an AI-driven government, thereby bringing artificial intelligence into an entirely new dimension. In anticipation of the first steps toward the formalization of this concept, Albania has already been widely discussed as the first country in the world that could inaugurate AI ministries - thus creating a precedent of global resonance. The news, announced in August 2025, initially sounded like a scene from a science-fiction film, especially given the reputation of a state that “carries the legacy of foreign occupation, dictatorial rule, and neglect” (Huisinga, 1998, p. 18). Since the beginning of its democratic transition in 1991, Albania’s fragile rule of law and pervasive corruption have been identified as its primary social problems (Cierco, 2014, p. 468).

Among the potential advantages of introducing AI into the executive branch are impartiality and transparency in combating corruption, as well as the country’s progress toward European Union accession. The goal certainly appears optimistic, considering that Albania ranks among the countries with a high corruption index (Eurostat, 2025) and that corrupt practices “pervade most of the country’s institutions” (Sikkema & Peci, 2010, p. 116).

That the Albanian Prime Minister is an atypical politician inclined toward eccentric behavior has become well-known to both Balkan and European audiences. Yet the question remains: is his conceptual projection of an AI-based government merely a performative political gesture? At the congress of the Socialist Party of Albania (of which Rama is the leader), the Prime Minister introduced Diella - the first minister in history created through artificial intelligence - assigning her field of activity to public procurement and tenders. What began as a party-stage message soon took a more serious path, culminating in the Presidential Decree of September 12, 2025, by which Rama was appointed Prime Minister following the completion of parliamentary elections (Dekreti për emërimin e kryeministrit, 2025). Thus, the legal nucleus of this innovation was initiated through the presidential act of appointing the Prime Minister, which carries a specific political weight, given that the AI entity Diella was mentioned in the very act that led to the formation of the central organ of executive power.

This brief factual overview opens questions about the constitutional and legal foundations of the conduct of executive officials. The issue here is not merely the extraordinary setting of a parliamentary

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session featuring the virtual presence of Diella, but rather two legal acts: the presidential decree granting the proposed Prime Minister the authority to establish an AI minister, and the Prime Minister's proposal of the new cabinet composition.

According to the constitutional framework, the head of state is obliged to appoint a Prime Minister based on the proposal of "the party or coalition of parties holding the majority in the Assembly" (Kushtetuta e Republikës së Shqipërisë, 1998, Art. 96). In accordance with Article 98 of the Albanian Constitution, the President of the Republic - again on the proposal of the parliamentary majority - submitted to the Assembly a decree with the proposed composition of the future government. Since Diella was not included in the list of proposed ministers, the question arises whether the President possesses the right to instruct or shape the cabinet composition beyond the formal proposal containing the precise names of ministerial candidates. There is little doubt that by mentioning the AI minister, the President implicitly accepted the proposal of the parliamentary majority, thereby - at least in our view - acting beyond the constitutional framework. The act of appointing the Prime Minister is of a strictly formal character and represents the legal expression of the functioning of central political institutions. Such matters must be regulated in a way that precisely defines and limits the powers and responsibilities of the highest officials of both the executive and representative branches.

Furthermore, Article 5 of the Constitution of the Republic of Albania stipulates that only an adult citizen of Albania (18 years of age or older) may be elected to office. The appointment of a minister constitutes the exercise of passive electoral rights, which presupposes the fulfillment of constitutional requirements - conditions that a virtual "person" obviously cannot meet. It should also be noted that the weaknesses of Albania's representative system "stem from the fragility of constitutional concepts, norms, and institutions, indicating that the Constitution - despite progress - has not yet become an undisputed reference point for politics and citizens alike" (Krasniqi, 2018, p. 1).

2. ECONOMIC VS. POLITICAL MOTIVES OF THE DIELLA PROJECT

Even in its initial stages of institutional emergence, the Diella project revealed numerous potential applications of artificial intelligence „in enhancing administrative transparency and controlling public expenditures“ (Aldemir & Ucma Uysal, 2015, p. 15). Current socio-political debate in Albania focuses on the multifaceted challenges related to the adequacy of the normative and institutional framework to properly absorb such an ambitious project as the digital ministry. Meanwhile, a deeper analysis of the reasons for its introduction into the system of public management remains in the background. Perhaps more than the idea of installing a digital minister as an institutionalized component of top-level public-sector management, what captured public attention was the "location" of this political experiment. Consequently, attempts to decipher the genuine economic and/or political motives behind its realization in an economically fragile, technologically underdeveloped, and corruption-burdened post-transition Balkan economy have become increasingly relevant.

According to the Corruption Perception Index, Albania (alongside Ghana) ranked 80th out of 180 countries included in the 2024 survey (Transparency International, 2024). The country's efforts, as an EU candidate, to demonstrate tangible results in fighting corruption remain heavily constrained by its decades-long communist legacy - under which the very term corruption was "virtually non-existent and used only marginally and rarely" (Kajsiju, 2013, p. 1009).

In principle, several logical economic and political motives can be isolated to explain the Albanian government's promotion of the digital ministry concept. Some relate to the potential performance of the digital instrument itself, while others stem from the specific characteristics of individual political actors and the broader socio-political environment in which such an innovation is to operate.

First and foremost, given that the digital ministry was conceptually positioned within the field of public procurement, it is understandable that its proponents emphasized the goal of curbing widespread and highly complex corrupt practices in this domain. The area of public procurement, both in Albania and in other post-transition economies of Southeast Europe, has long represented the epicenter of deeply entrenched corruption. In states where the rule of law is degraded, such practices have shown remarkable resistance to various reform attempts initiated by political actors.

Public procurement in Albania was first regulated by law in 1995. However, in the following decade, it became evident that the effective and independent application of legislative solutions remained more a matter of political populism than of genuine enforcement (Kashta, 2020). Thus, the intention to introduce an automated managerial authority precisely within the domain of public procurement appears, at least at first glance, entirely logical. The sector already rests upon a well-developed legislative framework, rich in technically precise provisions, which offers an excellent foundation for algorithmic reasoning - and

thereby a positive indication for the introduction of automated decision-making models. Nevertheless, even in the realm of public procurement, the “substance” of algorithmically generated decisions would have to transcend the content, purpose, and objectives of the existing legal norms - raising the problem of “decoding” the concept of public interest.

Beyond the specificities of the legal framework, which relatively align with the idea of digitalization, public procurement is also an obvious choice for another reason. Globally, public managers increasingly seek to align taxpayer money allocation with the triad of principles known as value for money - efficiency, effectiveness, and economy (Glendinning, 1988). The operationalization of this principle relies on the establishment of measurable indicators for decision-making performance, which are far easier to process algorithmically in procurement procedures than in other domains of public decision-making.

However, the declared aim of eliminating corruption in public procurement - the central official justification for introducing the digital ministry - can also be analyzed from a different perspective. From this viewpoint, the seemingly positive economic motives of the Diella project are overshadowed by certain unintended political effects. Drawing on the premises of the well-known public choice theory, the Diella project can be understood as a specific political product - designed, like all political products, to generate favorable perceptions among the so-called “median voter.” Its theoretical compatibility with proclaimed economic and political objectives in combating corruption makes the project an affirming political artifact that naturally appeals to the electorate’s rational expectations. Yet, the mere fact that a digital mechanism of governance is being inaugurated as a primary decision-making authority implicitly entails at least three unspoken „admissions“ by its political promoters: 1) that the existing human holders of managerial functions in the given sector are insufficiently competent to achieve the expected results; 2) that no other politically credible individual within the ruling elite can be found to meet these objectives; and consequently, 3) that corrupt behavioral patterns are so inherent to human nature that it is no longer worthwhile to entrust decision-making in corruption-sensitive fields to human agents at all.

Viewed together, these admissions transform the digital ministry - as a political product - into its own relative antithesis.

3. AI, DEMOCRACY, AND STATE GOVERNANCE

The experiences of transition and post-transition economies demonstrate that “surveillance capitalism challenges democratic norms and fundamentally diverges from the centuries-long evolution of market capitalism” (Zuboff, 2015, p. 75). The Albanian project of an AI minister raises questions about the maturity of social experience with representative democracy, where the “popperian dilemma - partocracy or democracy” - emerges as one of the central issues of scholarly debate (Ibraimllari, 2017, p. 90). It provokes reflection on the vulnerability of representative democracy in contemporary conditions: has society become oversaturated with the existing model of governance? Can the prevailing form of representative democracy withstand the growing crises of the established value system, which threaten the essence of freedom and the stability of peace both within and among states? Since 2018, there has been a steady rise in governmental strategies and programs dedicated to the development of AI and the identification of potential fields for its application (Bredt, 2019).

Let us therefore allow a bit of imaginative engineering to envision what democracy might look like under the governing power of artificial intelligence. Without attempting a theoretical definition of democracy, for the present context we can isolate two of its key identifiers: participation and information.

Understood as the rule of the people, democracy implies the participation of all, a majority, or at least a portion of the community’s members in decision-making processes. It can by no means be reduced to a mere “organizational framework.” The numerical scope of such participation depends on the specific model and the prescribed rules for the validity of direct popular involvement (elections, referenda, citizens’ initiatives, etc.). In modern political systems, elements of direct participation are introduced as attempts to legitimize representative democracy, given the practical impossibility of realizing the Athenian ideal of direct deliberation. In this respect, the Republic of Albania is no exception: its Constitution provides that popular sovereignty is exercised through elected representatives or direct participation (Article 4), although in practice, “popular sovereignty remains unimplemented in Albania and far removed from reality” (Tafari & Sina, 2020, p. 186).

Artificial intelligence, however, offers the potential for an enhanced level of immediacy through virtual models of participation by all community members. This may be viewed as a significant initial advantage of introducing advanced technology into the very nucleus of democracy. The opportunity for all citizens to participate directly in decision-making processes already exists in the current political framework - but is rarely exercised.

Naturally, the same factors that reduce citizens' participation in traditional democratic processes could also be expected in the digital environment. Yet, it is plausible to assume that the number of participants would increase under conditions of digital voting, thereby raising the representativeness of political processes. This, of course, presupposes the establishment of a reliable, verifiable, and strictly controlled system - what might be termed, for present purposes, "political artificial intelligence." Citizens must trust that the parameters of the software used for voting meet the democratic standards of universality, secrecy, and direct personal choice. "However, even if the conditions of digital literacy among voters and the political neutrality of the e-voting system are simultaneously met, the question remains whether electronic voting truly enhances the quality of the democratic process through higher turnout. It is worth asking what the nature of that improvement is, since the causes of civic apathy and insufficient representativeness in modern democracies are far deeper and more complex than could be remedied by technical conveniences such as voting from home or weeks in advance" (Marković, 2023, pp. 440–441).

The citizens' level of information regarding the issues on which they express opinions provides the foundation for the democratic value of political processes. The availability and truthfulness of relevant information directly affect the objectivity and quality of political outcomes.

Technology companies that design algorithms targeting the electorate possess the power to influence voter preferences - and consequently, election outcomes. The intertwining of politicians and these corporations creates fertile ground for covert pacts and the subversion of freedom as a fundamental democratic value. "If a handful of giant corporations can suppress or marginalize the convictions of large segments of the citizenry, political life becomes less pluralistic and less democratic" (Volokh, 2025, pp. 273–274).

In academic reflections on the phenomenon of artificial intelligence, it is no longer uncommon to find views that characterize this technological leap as a hostile creation and a threat to democracy, insofar as it is fundamentally aligned with technocracy (Risse, 2023). Starting from the notion that "there are two types of trust - interpersonal and social" (Schneier, 2025, p. 29), and that these categories are often conflated, it must be emphasized that strengthening social trust is vital for the acceptance of AI mechanisms. When it comes to state governance, artificial intelligence deserves to be treated as a high-risk domain. Based on the experience of modern public administration, the control of financial flows - and of those who manage them - represents one of the greatest challenges faced by both national and global economies. Accordingly, one must be concerned about the direction in which a community may evolve if governance were to be entrusted to artificial intelligence. "The rule of AI threatens to further concentrate power in the hands of unaccountable bureaucrats, technocrats, and, in some cases, autocrats" (Schmidt, 2024).

Moreover, the political art of governance cannot be reduced to a purely technical endeavor. Decision-making in politics is not a simple operation; it involves a complex interplay of unpredictable variables inherent to the richness of political life. Often, the pursuit of the public interest requires political compromise to maintain social balance - an inherently human capacity that remains beyond the reach of algorithms, at least at their current level of development.

When it comes to emerging technologies, the legal function of maintaining social order has been partially eroded, as laws are increasingly described as "outdated" (Jammet, 2014, p. 2). The rapid development and application of generative AI have outpaced traditional regulatory mechanisms, creating an urgent "need for comprehensive governance frameworks" (Vatamanu & Tofan, 2025, p. 6). Given that AI solutions depend on the data fed into their "intellectual reservoirs," the key question becomes the nature and quality of that data - particularly with respect to political instrumentalization - and the need for an effective legal framework to regulate it. As "artificial intelligence is supplied and guided according to the planned value assumptions set at the beginning of the process by humans - that is, by the governing system itself" (Đorđević & Matić, 2025, p. 97), the insertion of value-laden data is inevitably a source of conflict, since its political coloring poses the main challenge to the impartial and objective conduct of a digital government.

It is important to distinguish between two fundamental types of values within a legal-political order. The first consists of those universally accepted through constitutional compromise, representing a firm societal consensus. In a modern constitutional state, the foundational data that AI would use as core societal values derive from the constitution itself: democracy, free elections, human rights, equality, popular sovereignty, social justice, free markets, the separation of powers, and judicial independence. The second type of values is determined by the shifting political will of the people - a variable category. "In a democratic state, governments responsible for gathering and acting upon public opinion must establish and implement policies in accordance with the public will. However, determining an objective method to confirm which laws or policies genuinely reflect that will remains a challenge" (Kim, 2024, p. 547). The

expression of the popular will is cyclical, shaped by elections that direct the course of social development. Yet, an AI system would likely reject positions that contradict or threaten the established framework of foundational constitutional values. The dominant electoral will, embodied through parliamentary majorities, constructs the operative instruments for implementing political programs. Within this context, the imperative of strengthening Albania's fragile civil society must not be overlooked, as it "stands between the individual, the state, and the market, mitigating negative political trends, creating social capital, and nurturing new values and traditions" (Shehaj, Krashi & Gjonaj, 2017, p. 430).

The case presented in Albania raises a series of not only constitutional but also numerous other legal dilemmas. To begin with, it is reasonable to inquire into the legal personality and legal responsibility of an "artificial minister," which represents a serious challenge. The well-established experience of legal civilization, whereby human beings are the original holders of legal personality, is not undermined by the fact that objective law grants personality to legal entities as artificial constructs. However, an "AI minister" confronts the legal order with practically unsolvable challenges—ones that legal theory, legislation, and legal practice must jointly attempt to address. Contemporary legal approaches "call into question the central role of the human subject in law, suggesting that artificial intelligence may function as a legal actor within hybrid governance systems" (Minghirasi, 2025, p. 88).

Furthermore, the question arises as to how the activities of an "AI minister" could be legally and technically harmonized with a key principle of modern European data protection legislation: "individuals have the right not to be subject to decisions based solely on automated processing, including profiling, if such decisions produce legal effects or similarly significant impacts" (Minghirasi, 2025, p. 89). The "Albanian case" is, in fact, an example of a project expressly designed to automate decision-making in the governance of certain state activities.

The legal controversy is further intensified by the problems that arise in the field of human rights protection. "These systems may have a profound impact on individuals' lives. Their inadequate application can undermine fundamental rights, such as the right to social protection, non-discrimination, human dignity, or an effective legal remedy" (Cvetković, 2022, pp. 79–80). It is particularly important to emphasize that the classical understanding of discrimination acquires a new dimension in the context of artificial intelligence. Earlier forms of discrimination—whether carried out by public authorities or private actors—were relatively easy to detect, whereas potential algorithmic discrimination is characterized by a higher level of opacity, making it significantly more difficult to eliminate. "Unlike rule-based systems, where decisions can be traced, machine-learning systems often cannot provide a clear causal link between input data and resulting outcomes... which essentially means that identifying discriminatory patterns or contesting erroneous reasoning becomes nearly impossible" (Lendvai & Gosztonyi, 2025, p. 10).

The automation of legal decision-making processes is classified as high-risk artificial intelligence because of the danger that society might become the object of inadequately controlled algorithmic mechanisms. Attention should also be drawn to the risks associated with the allocation of sources of legal authority, for such power could shift from the social sphere to the ownership capital of the creative industries behind advanced generations of contemporary technology. However, in a foreseeable future, the pendulum of political influence on the law may swing "directly into the hands" of those who possess the largest concentrations of digital capital, resulting in the erosion of the democratic capacity of the legal order.

4. CONCLUSION

The official introduction of the idea of an AI minister in the Albanian government marks 2025 as the beginning of a new phase in the evolution of modern technology. The pendulum of technological innovation is now swinging toward the governance of the state and society, signaling the emergence of new centers of power. The fact that the promoter of this idea is a statesman known for his atypical political behavior may suggest that the initiative represents a marketing maneuver aimed at supporting Albania's accelerated path toward European integration. Implicit in this, however, is a hidden acknowledgment that the state lacks the human resources to effectively confront corruption - the country's most pressing problem and the chief obstacle on its road to the EU.

Nonetheless, this should not deter us from contemplating the potential perspectives of "political artificial intelligence" and its possible impact on governance processes. The use of digital methods in certain states has already demonstrated how technological innovation can influence the very structure of modern democracy. It may reasonably be assumed that systems of online voting could gradually mitigate the problem of indifference of citizens toward electoral participation. For this to happen, however, voters must first have confidence in the preservation of democratic principles - directness, secrecy, and equality

- as well as in the authenticity of official election results. Equally important is the level of trust in the state that organizes elections and in the expectation that political actors will not betray the citizens' faith in the fulfillment of campaign promises. Can artificial intelligence foster such trust?

Judging from current experience with tools of "political artificial intelligence", their role has largely been limited to that of auxiliary technical instruments, with little observable contribution to enhancing the democratic capacity of political processes. We maintain that the democratic quality of social life depends on citizens' trust in government, through which state authority attains legitimacy.

The automation of governance decisions through advanced technological tools presupposes that citizens possess sufficient knowledge to understand how these systems operate. A lack of both general and individual digital literacy undermines the principle of equality - an indispensable element in the process of establishing democratic legitimacy.

Accordingly, it is essential to establish an appropriate legal framework to regulate the reliability, accountability, transparency, and acceptability of "political artificial intelligence," whose algorithms must not contain "black boxes" or generate hallucinatory outcomes. Such problems are already observable in the use of advanced generative AI technologies and would be wholly unacceptable within the political domain. The impact of AI systems on democracy is of such magnitude that it must be treated as a matter of high institutional risk. The absence of trust in artificial intelligence - and in its capacity to promote democracy - further deepens crises of legitimacy and weakens public confidence in governance.

Summing up the research inspired by the idea of an AI minister in the Government of the Republic of Albania, and expanded through reflections on a hypothetically new model of state administration, it is reasonable to conclude that the dangers posed to democracy significantly outweigh the potential benefits of applying artificial intelligence within the political and administrative sphere of society.

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