РАҚАМЛИ БОШҚАРУВ МЕЪЁРЛАРГА РИОЯ ҚИЛИШ МЕХАНИЗМИ: ЎЗБЕКИСТОНДА КОРРУПЦИЯГА ҚАРШИ КУРАШИШНИНГ ХАЛҚАРО-ҲУҚУҚИЙ ЖИҲАТЛАРИ ВА «РАҚАМЛИ РИОЯ ДИВИДЕНДИ» КОНЦЕПЦИЯСИ

ЦИФРОВОЕ УПРАВЛЕНИЕ КАК МЕХАНИЗМ СОБЛЮДЕНИЯ НОРМ: МЕЖДУНАРОДНО-ПРАВОВЫЕ АСПЕКТЫ ПРОТИВОДЕЙСТВИЯ КОРРУПЦИИ В УЗБЕКИСТАНЕ И КОНЦЕПЦИЯ «ЦИФРОВОГО ДИВИДЕНДА СОБЛЮДЕНИЯ»

DIGITAL GOVERNANCE AS A COMPLIANCE MECHANISM: INTERNATIONAL LEGAL DIMENSIONS OF ANTI-CORRUPTION IN UZBEKISTAN AND THE 'DIGITAL COMPLIANCE DIVIDEND' THRESHOLD

Akhror Saidov [1a]

[1] Докторант, Тошкент давлат юридик университети, Тошкент, Ўзбекистон

[1] Докторант, Ташкентский государственный юридический университет, Ташкент, Узбекистан

[1] PhD Researcher, Tashkent State University of Law, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

[a] hddsaidov@gmail.com

Аннотация: Аниқландики, рақамли бошқарув Ўзбекистонда коррупцияга қарши курашишнинг марказий воситасига айланган, аммо унинг ЮНКАК мажбуриятларига риоя қилишдаги самараси автоматик эмас. Ўрнатилдики, рақамлаштиришнинг риояга айланиши маълум бир ҳуқуқий-институционал остона ошиб ўтилгандагина рўй беради. Рақамли хизматларнинг тарқалиши билан коррупциянинг камайиши ўртасидаги боғлиқликнинг ноаниқ хусусияти тавсифланади. Маълумотлар яхлитлиги ва киберҳужумлар хавфининг риоя механизмига таъсири баҳоланди. «Рақамли риоя дивиденди» концепцияси таклиф этилди, унга кўра остонадан паст даражада рақамлаштириш коррупцияни камайтириш ўрнига уни яшириши мумкин. Ўзбекистон учун 2027 йилда ЮНКАК Иштирокчи давлатлар конференциясини ўтказиш имконияти асосида ислоҳот дастури таклиф этилди.

Аннотация: Установлено, что цифровое управление стало центральным инструментом противодействия коррупции в Узбекистане, однако его эффективность в обеспечении соблюдения обязательств по ЮНКАК не является автоматической. Выявлено, что преобразование цифровизации в реальное соблюдение норм происходит лишь при преодолении определённого правового и институционального порога. Охарактеризован нелинейный характер взаимосвязи между распространением цифровых услуг и снижением уровня коррупции. Оценено влияние целостности данных и киберугроз на механизм соблюдения норм. Предложена концепция «цифрового дивиденда соблюдения», согласно которой цифровизация ниже порогового уровня способна не снижать, а маскировать коррупцию. Рассмотрена программа реформ для Узбекистана в контексте проведения Конференции государств-участников ЮНКАК в 2027 году.

Abstract: Found that digital governance has become the central instrument of anti-corruption policy in Uzbekistan, yet its effectiveness in securing compliance with UNCAC obligations is not automatic. Established that the conversion of digitalization into genuine compliance occurs only above a definable legal-institutional threshold. Characterised the non-linear relationship between the diffusion of digital public services and the reduction of corruption. Impact of data integrity and cyber-threats on the compliance mechanism was evaluated. A 'digital compliance dividend' concept is proposed, according to which digitalization below the threshold may mask rather than reduce corruption. A reform agenda for Uzbekistan is considered in the context of its hosting of the UNCAC Conference of States Parties in 2027.

Калит сўзлар: рақамли бошқарув; меъёрларга риоя қилиш; коррупцияга қарши курашиш; ЮНКАК; электрон хукумат; Ўзбекистон

Ключевые слова: цифровое управление; соблюдение норм; противодействие коррупции; ЮНКАК; электронное правительство; Узбекистан

Keywords: digital governance; compliance control; anti-corruption; UNCAC; e-government; Uzbekistan

I. INTRODUCTION

The relationship between digital governance and compliance with international anti-corruption obligations has become one of the most consequential questions in contemporary international law scholarship. As states increasingly deploy electronic government platforms, automated public-service delivery, and open-data systems as anti-corruption instruments, a critical question arises: "Does digitalization by itself produce compliance with international anti-corruption norms, or does its effectiveness depend on prior legal and institutional conditions?". This question is of particular salience for transitional states, where the pace of technological adoption frequently outstrips the maturation of the legal frameworks within which technology must operate.

Uzbekistan presents an exceptionally instructive case. Within a single decade the country has transformed itself from a digital laggard into a regional leader in electronic governance. In the 2024 UN E-Government Development Index it entered the 'Very High EGDI' group for the first time, ranking 63rd of 193 states [1]. In the World Bank's GovTech Maturity Index it advanced 71 positions between 2020 and 2025, achieving the highest score in Central Asia and ranking ninth globally [1; 2]. By 2024, users of digital public services exceeded ten million, and more than 775 services became available through the unified My.gov.uz portal [2; 3]. This transformation has been explicitly framed by the government as an anti-corruption strategy, guided by the principle that *"People are not supposed to serve the state bodies, but it is the state bodies that should serve the people"* [3].

Yet the international legal significance of this transformation remains undertheorised. This thesis addresses that gap by examining digital governance as a compliance-control mechanism under the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), to which Uzbekistan has been a party since 2008. It advances an original analytical contribution — the concept of a 'digital compliance dividend' subject to a threshold condition — and applies it to Uzbekistan's reform trajectory, culminating in a forward-looking reform agenda oriented around the country's hosting of the UNCAC Conference of States Parties (CoSP-12) in 2027.

II. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative doctrinal and institutional methodology, combining three analytical strands in balanced measure. First, a doctrinal analysis situates digital governance within the compliance-control obligations of UNCAC — in particular Article 5 (preventive anti-corruption policies), Article 9 (public procurement and public financial management), Article 10 (public reporting), and Article 13 (participation of society). Second, an empirical analysis draws on current governance indicators — the EGDI, the GovTech Maturity Index, the Open Data ranking, and Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index — together with primary Uzbek legal instruments and the OECD's Fifth Round Istanbul Action Plan monitoring report of 2024. Third, a theoretical synthesis integrates the emerging comparative literature on digital governance and corruption to construct the 'digital compliance dividend' framework.

The methodological premise is that compliance-control effectiveness cannot be inferred from the diffusion of digital tools alone; it must be assessed against the legal and institutional conditions under which those tools operate. Accordingly, the analysis triangulates quantitative governance indicators against doctrinal compliance benchmarks and qualitative institutional evidence, rather than treating any single indicator as dispositive.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. *Digitalization as a compliance instrument.* The evidence establishes that Uzbekistan has operationalised digital governance as a genuine compliance-control instrument across several UNCAC domains. In public procurement — historically among the highest corruption-risk areas and a core concern of UNCAC Article 9 — electronic platforms such as e-xarid.uz and xarid.uz have introduced competitive, transparent tendering [4]. In the domain of public reporting under Article 10, the Open Data Portal (data.gov.uz), the Open Budget Portal, and mandatory publication of 42 categories of socially significant data have institutionalised transparency, advancing Uzbekistan 138 places in the global Open Data ranking to 11th worldwide [4]. Citizen reporting mechanisms — the E-anticor.uz platform and dedicated hotlines — operationalise the participation obligation of Article 13 [4; 5]. These achievements are substantial and internationally recognised, culminating in the decision at the December 2025 UNCAC Conference in Doha to hold CoSP-12 in Uzbekistan in 2027 [6].

B. *The non-linearity problem*. However, the evidence equally establishes that digital diffusion has not translated proportionally into measured compliance outcomes. In 2025 Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index recorded Uzbekistan's first score decline in over a decade, falling from 33 to 32 [6; 7]. Court statistics reveal a parallel tension: while corruption-related cases reviewed by local courts rose 12.5% in 2024 and estimated damages doubled to approximately USD 220 million, only 20 per cent of convicted individuals received custodial sentences [6]. The whistleblower framework illustrates the same non-linearity: although a digital reporting infrastructure exists, only 31 persons were rewarded for reporting corruption in 2024, and 28 of those received letters of appreciation rather than the financial rewards, because an automated reward mechanism has not yet been established [5]. Digital infrastructure, in other words, has outpaced the legal and institutional machinery required to convert it into enforcement.

C. *The theoretical account: the digital compliance dividend and its threshold*. These findings are consistent with an emerging body of comparative scholarship that rejects a linear relationship between digitalization and integrity. Santiso's 'integrity dividend' hypothesis holds that digitalization reduces rent-seeking opportunities by limiting discretion and official-citizen contact [8]. Yet Bajestani and colleagues caution that in environments characterised by a weak rule of law, digital technologies may unintentionally facilitate rather than reduce corruption, and cross-national panel evidence confirms a 'threshold effect' in the digital-governance/anti-corruption relationship [8; 9]. Synthesising these positions, this thesis proposes the concept of a digital compliance dividend subject to a threshold condition: digital governance yields genuine UNCAC compliance only once three legal-institutional preconditions are satisfied — (i) the codification of digital anti-corruption tools as legally binding obligations rather than administrative practices; (ii) the existence of independent oversight capable of auditing the integrity of the underlying data; and (iii) the protection of that data against manipulation and cyber-compromise. Below this threshold, digitalization risks producing a compliance simulacrum — the appearance of transparency without the substance of accountability — and may even displace corruption from detectable human interactions into less visible digital and data-layer manipulations.

D. *The data-integrity vulnerability*. The threshold framework draws urgent support from Uzbekistan's cyber-security exposure. Where compliance depends on the integrity of digital records, the security of those records becomes a compliance question, not merely a technical one. A compliance system premised on electronic records whose integrity cannot be independently assured does not satisfy the threshold condition, however advanced its service-delivery metrics. This insight reframes cybersecurity as an integral component of anti-corruption compliance under international law — a dimension largely absent from existing UNCAC implementation analysis.

E. *The reform window*. Two recent developments create an exceptional opportunity to cross the threshold. First, on 26 December 2025 the President declared an anti-corruption 'state of emergency', mandating that from 1 January 2026 all state institutions implement a new compliance and internal-control system with dedicated anti-corruption deputies [6]. Presidential Decree No. PQ-147 of 21 April 2025 had already moved to secure the independence of internal anti-corruption units [4; 13]. Second, Uzbekistan's hosting of CoSP-12 in 2027 creates both reputational incentive and international scrutiny [6]. Together these establish the political conditions under which the threshold preconditions can be legislated.

IV. CONCLUSION: A REFORM AGENDA FOR THRESHOLD-CROSSING

This thesis has argued that digital governance functions as a compliance-control mechanism under international anti-corruption law only conditionally — that the 'digital compliance dividend' is realised solely above a legal-institutional threshold defined by codification, independent oversight, and data integrity. Uzbekistan's remarkable digital achievements have brought it to the threshold; the evidence of non-linearity indicates it has not yet decisively crossed it.

Three reform priorities follow directly, and each can be advanced within the window created by the 2026 compliance mandate and the 2027 CoSP-12 hosting. First, codification: the anti-corruption functions of e-procurement, open-data publication, and electronic reporting should be elevated from administrative practice to binding legal obligations with defined standards and justiciable consequences, converting digital transparency into enforceable compliance duties under UNCAC Articles 9 and 10. Second, independent digital oversight: the internal anti-corruption units mandated for 2026 should be complemented by an oversight capacity empowered to audit the integrity of the data on which compliance claims rest — including automated cross-verification of asset declarations against integrated databases, thereby completing the accountability loop. Third, data-integrity protection: cybersecurity of anti-corruption data systems should be recognised, in law and in institutional design, as a component of UNCAC compliance, ensuring that the electronic records underpinning transparency are protected against manipulation.

For international law scholarship, the Uzbek case demonstrates that the compliance value of digital governance cannot be read from adoption metrics alone; it must be assessed against the legal-institutional threshold that converts digital capacity into genuine accountability. As Uzbekistan prepares to host the international anti-corruption community in 2027, its experience offers a model: digitalization is a necessary but insufficient condition of compliance, and its promise is realised only when law, oversight, and data integrity advance together with technology.

АДАБИЁТЛАР РЎЙХАТИ; БИБЛИОГРАФИЧЕСКИЕ ССЫЛКИ; REFERENCES

1. The Diplomat (2026). Uzbekistan's Race to Build a Digital State. 8 July 2026.
2. Kuliev, K.R., Saida, N. (2026). Uzbekistan's Anti-Corruption Emergency: What Comes After a Decade of Reform? The Diplomat, 21 January 2026.
3. Euronews (2025). From Paperwork to Platforms: Uzbekistan Accelerates Digital Governance. 25 December 2025.

4. The Diplomatic Insight (2026). Uzbekistan's Evolving Anti-Corruption Model: From Legal Reform to Systemic Transformation. 6 March 2026.

5. Gazeta.uz (2025). Individuals Reporting Corruption in Uzbekistan to Receive Protection Orders. 11 December 2025.

6. UNODC (2025). Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, Eleventh Session, Doha. Vienna: UNODC.

7. Transparency International (2025). Corruption Perceptions Index 2024. Berlin: Transparency International.

8. Santiso, C. (2022). 'Govern the Digital Transformation to Curb Corruption: The Integrity Dividend of Digital Government.' Digital Government: Research and Practice.

9. PLOS One (2025). 'Digital Governance, Anti-Corruption and Political Stability: An Empirical Study Using Cross-National Panel Data.' PLOS One, 20(12).

10. OECD (2024). Baseline Report of the Fifth Round of Monitoring of Anti-Corruption Reforms in Uzbekistan. Paris: OECD Publishing.

11. United Nations Convention against Corruption, GA Res 58/4, 31 October 2003, A/RES/58/4.

12. Chayes, A., Chayes, A.H. (1995). The New Sovereignty: Compliance with International Regulatory Agreements. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

13. President of the Republic of Uzbekistan (2025). Decree No. PQ-147 of 21 April 2025 'On Measures to Ensure the Independence of Internal Anti-Corruption Units in State Bodies and Organisations'. Tashkent.

14. Saidov, A. (2025). Anti-Corruption Reforms in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan: Explaining Divergent Outcomes in Post-Soviet States. MSc Dissertation, London School of Economics and Political Science.