

Digital Corporatism: State-business Dynamics of Digital State Capacity Building in China



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Bio:

Tianguang Meng is a professor in the Department of Political Science and Associate Dean of the School of Social Sciences at Tsinghua University. His research interest includes Chinese politics, politics of information, AI and digital governance, and computational social science. He is the director of The Research Center on Data and Governance, and the executive director of Tsinghua Lab on Computational Social Science. He has published four books on China politics and digital governance. His articles have been published in *Comparative Political Studies*, *Comparative Politics*, *Governance*, *World Development*, *Social Science Research*, *Policy Study Journal*, and *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*.

Abstract:

While most of the scholarly attention has been paid to the consequences of government digitization, this article seeks to explore the process of digital state capacity building by identifying the factors that affect the state's investment decisions on digitization. This paper explores digital state capacity building through the lens of demand-supply dynamics underlying the state capacity building process. Through a close empirical examination of 56,900 procurement records on digital government from 2018 to 2022, we justify that the digital state capacity building process in China is led by the state actors on the supply side rather than by the social actors on the demand side, in which the vertical leading and horizontal competition mechanisms take effects at the prefectural level. Moreover, we demonstrate how clientelist, developmentalist and corporatist state-business relationships, indicative of demand-supply interactions, are profoundly reshaped by the digital technological revolution and yielded mixed effects on the process of digital state capacity building in China.



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