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N° 79 Octubre Diciembre 2023

Digitalization of criminal proceedings in Russia and on the international stage *

DOI: https://doi.org/10.46398/cuestpol.4179.32

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Abstract

The article considers the application of artificial intelligence systems in criminal proceedings. In jurisprudence, it is possible to use information technologies through the introduction of electronic document management and remote holding of court sessions. However, the question of automating decision making remains open, especially in the field of criminal procedure. The purpose of the present study was to identify the positive and negative features of artificial intelligence systems operating in the criminal practice of various countries and to consider the possibility of introducing such systems into the Russian criminal

process, taking into account their compliance with their purpose and principles. The methodology included a systematic method of scientific cognition, a comparative legal method and a formal logical method, etc. During the research, the regulatory and legal framework of different countries was studied, which makes it possible to apply artificial intelligence systems in criminal proceedings, as well as to assess the work of foreign and Russian researchers in this field. It is concluded that the implementation of such principles as: the independence of judges and the adversarial nature of the parties in criminal proceedings are difficult in a legal framework dominated by artificial intelligence.

Keywords: criminal proceedings; artificial intelligence; judge; decision-making; digitalization.

^{*} The work was carried out as part of the implementation of the development program of the Southwest State University project "Priority-2030".

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Digitalización de los procesos penales en Rusia y en el escenario internacional

Resumen

El artículo considera la aplicación de sistemas de inteligencia artificial en procesos penales. En jurisprudencia, es posible utilizar las tecnologías de la información mediante la introducción de la gestión electrónica de documentos y la celebración remota de sesiones judiciales. Sin embargo, la cuestión de la automatización de la toma de decisiones sigue abierta, especialmente en el ámbito procesal penal. El propósito del presente estudio fue identificar las características positivas y negativas de los sistemas de inteligencia artificial que funcionan en la práctica criminal de varios países y considerar la posibilidad de introducir dichos sistemas en el proceso penal ruso, teniendo en cuenta su cumplimiento con su propósito y principios. La metodología incluyo un método sistemático de cognición científica, un método legal comparativo y un método lógico formal, etc. Durante la investigación, se estudió el marco regulatorio y legal de distintos países lo que permite aplicar sistemas de inteligencia artificial en procesos penales, así como valorar el trabajo de investigadores extranjeros y rusos en este campo. Se concluye que la implementación de principios, como: la independencia de los jueces y la naturaleza contradictoria de las partes en el proceso penal son difíciles en un marco jurídico dominado por la inteligencia artificial.

Palabras clave: procesos penales; inteligencia artificial; juez; toma de decisiones; digitalización.

Introduction

According to some research, robots will soon replace human labor in the intellectual sphere as well. People will have to learn how to interact with the products of human intelligence (Rezaev, Tregubova, 2020). Moreover, the National Strategy for the Development of Artificial Intelligence, adopted at the end of 2019, is focused on the increasing introduction of automated systems using artificial intelligence in social organizations and state bodies (Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 490 of October 10, 2019 "On the development of artificial intelligence in the Russian Federation").

According to a survey conducted by the All-Russian Center for the Study of Public Opinion, 85% of respondents did not express concern that their workplace might disappear in the foreseeable future due to robotics. At the same time, we should note that some experts predict an increase in unemployment due to technological progress (Abramov *et al.*, 2020).

For manual labor, such a replacement will certainly be a positive moment, but the automation of intellectual labor also raises a number of questions. It is necessary to develop such algorithms that will allow us not to doubt the objectiveness and accuracy of decisions.

Artificial intelligence systems are successfully applied in many areas (autopilots in airplanes and cars, financial management, medical diagnostics, etc.). However, the areas where it is necessary to make key decisions have not completely switched to automation. Artificial intelligence systems only help a person to make a decision by providing from one to several possible answers to a question. The final choice is still up to the person. In addition, there are a number of ethical points that must be observed.

Automated systems are gradually being introduced in jurisprudence sphere, but their extension to decision-making by judges, especially in criminal cases, causes discussions in the scientific community.

Research on this topic was conducted by both Russian and foreign scientists. A. A. Nasonov and R. Yu. Malueva proposed to expand the electronic document flow in the Russian criminal process (Nasonov and Malueva, 2020). O. I. Andreeva and O. A. Zaitsev consider it necessary to simplify the use of electronic signatures using a graphic tablet and a writing pen (Andreeva *et al.*, 2020). The issue of spreading electronic interaction mechanisms to all forms of legal proceedings was considered by I. S. Denisov (Denisov, 2018).

The works of foreign scientists are also of interest. Christopher Rigano (Rigano, 2019). Shai Danziger, Jonathan Levav, and Liora Avnaim-Pesso analyzed factors that influence judges' process decision-making and the possibility of leveling negative manifestations through the use of artificial intelligence systems (Danziger *et al.*, 2011). Benoit Dupont, Yuan Stevens, Hannes Westermann, Michael Joyce in their work "Artificial Intelligence in the Context of Crime and Criminal Justice" considered COMPAS (Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions) and PSA (Public Safety Assessment) systems used in the United States (Dupont *et al.*, 2019).

However, the issue of e-justice systems functioning has not been fully studied. In the above-mentioned works, the authors only analyze certain aspects of artificial intelligence system application in criminal proceedings, without giving an unambiguous answer to the question of the possibility of full automation of decision-making by judges.

Clearly, such decisions will be distinguished by an unbiased approach based on the analysis of statistical data. However, the limited possibilities of individualization make us think about the introduction of artificial intelligence systems in the criminal process.

Within the framework of this paper, we will consider various approaches to the definition of artificial intelligence, the possibility of its introduction into criminal proceedings. We will also discuss foreign experience in using electronic justice systems, as well as compliance with the purpose and principles of criminal proceedings, and the ethical requirements of decisions made by robot judges.

1. Materials and Methods

The goal of the present study is to identify the positive and negative aspects of artificial intelligence systems application in criminal proceedings.

The objectives of the study are: 1) consideration of various approaches to the definition of the concept "artificial intelligence"; 2) conducting a comparative study of the theory and practice of using artificial intelligence systems in criminal proceedings in Russia and foreign countries; 3) identifying ethical and systemic contradictions in the application of artificial intelligence systems in decision-making by judges; 4) finding and solving problems in the use of artificial intelligence in criminal proceedings.

The methodology includes a systematic method of scientific cognition that reflects the relationship of social, economic, political and legal phenomena with the possibility of introducing artificial intelligence systems into the criminal process. To achieve the research objectives and solve the tasks set, more specific methods were used, such as the comparative legal method through which the features of legal regulation of electronic justice systems functioning in the criminal process of various countries are analyzed. There was also applied the formal logical method consisting in the interpretation of legal norms content regulating artificial intelligence systems, etc.

In the course of the study, it is planned to consider the foreign experience of implementing artificial intelligence systems in the criminal process. To perform this, it is necessary to compare the regulatory and legal frameworks regulating the possibility of functioning of e-justice systems in different countries.

An analysis of international legislation in this area will allow us to identify the attitude of the international community to the problem under study and to implement some norms in the Russian criminal process.

The authors rely on the works of Russian and foreign scientists, which contain a detailed analysis of certain aspects of the topic. Summing up the existing legislative and practical restrictions will make it possible to identify the optimal ways to solve existing problems.

2. Results analysis

In recent years, we have heard more and more about electronic justice. Electronic justice is a method and form of implementation of procedural actions provided for by law, based on the use of information technologies in the activities of courts, including the interaction of courts, individuals and legal entities in electronic (digital) form. This definition is given in the Decree of the Judicial Department at the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation No. 362 of November 26, 2015 (Decree of the Judicial Department at the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation of November 26, 2015 No. 362 "On approval of the List of basic concepts and terms used in the normative legal acts of the Judicial Department regulating the use of information and telecommunications technologies in the activities of courts, departments of the Judicial Department in the territorial entities of the Russian Federation and institutions of the Judicial Department").

According to this definition, electronic justice is focused exclusively on the judicial system and does not involve decision-making by an automated system. To a greater extent, this approach is explained by the desire to facilitate some procedural points during the trial, rather than replace the judge.

Partially electronic document management has already been introduced in many branches of procedural law. It is now possible to conduct court proceedings remotely, but robots have not yet completely replaced a person in any legal profession.

The elements of electronic justice are: openness of information; remote interaction; accessible database of court decisions; international recognition of court decisions; electronic document management; electronic remote initiation of proceedings and submission of documents; electronic provision of information; electronic consulting (Ovchinnikov and Antonov, 2016).

Some elements of electronic justice already exist and are being developed in Russia in all forms of legal proceedings. The use of videoconferencing during the trial is provided for by Russian legislation, which reduces court costs and speeds up case hearing, as well as the costs of escorting the accused and minimizes the risk of escape during the prisoner escort under guard (Sofiychuk and Kolpakova, 2020). However, not all courts, especially local district courts, have the technical capability to provide this type of communication, which will hinder its implementation. However, on the whole, it is not new for Russian pre-trial and judicial practice to be able to submit petitions, complaints and applications in electronic form, signed with an electronic signature, notifying the participants of the process via SMS or e-mail.

In addition, in Russia, the composition of the court for the hearing of each criminal case is formed taking into account the workload and specialization of judges by using an automated information system, which ensures impartiality. If it is impossible to use it, it is allowed to form the composition of the court in a different order, excluding the influence of persons interested in the outcome of the trial on its formation (Dobrovlyanina, 2019).

In foreign practice, when resolving civil, arbitration and administrative cases, they also resort to the help of automated systems, which allows optimizing the decision-making process. For example, in Brazil, there is an "Electronic Judge" system that can be used to resolve disputes arising from road accidents. The program algorithm analyzes the submitted documents and evidence, and then offers a draft verdict to be considered by the court.

In Germany, an automated system is used to resolve claims for child benefits. Online trials for some categories of cases (mainly arbitration and civil cases) are held in Australia, Canada and China. In China, the world's first Hangzhou Internet court was opened in 2017. Its peculiarity is that the proceedings are conducted entirely via the Internet, starting with the filing of a claim and ending with the execution of a court decision (Sheremetyeva *et al.*, 2020).

The term "artificial intelligence" was first introduced by John McCarthy at the first-ever conference on artificial intelligence at Dartmouth College. He defined it as the science and technology of creating intelligent machines (IBM Cloud Education, 2020).

Later definitions give a detailed understanding of its purpose.

Artificial intelligence is the ability of a machine to perceive the environment, respond to it independently and perform tasks that usually require human intelligence and decision-making processes, but without direct human intervention (Rigano, 2019).

Artificial intelligence is also defined as the ability to process a lot of data based on algorithms and machine learning, which allows one to detect and analyze patterns for automatic generation of autonomous activities and new decision-making rules that are not offered by people (IBM Cloud Education, 2020).

A more scientific definition revealing the principle of artificial intelligence operation was proposed by the participants of the European Committee on Crime Problems: "a set of certain methods, including mathematical logic, statistics, probability, computational neuroscience and computer science, in order to enable a machine to imitate or even replace human cognitive abilities" (European Committee on Crime Problems (CDPC). (2020). Feasibility study on a future council of Europe instrument on artificial intelligence and criminal law. Strasbourg).

These definitions are united by the fact that artificial intelligence is presented as a system that seeks to make the decision-making process more rational and objective, excluding the influence of external and internal human factors on the process itself and the final decision.

Human decisions and behavior are based on various, sometimes incalculable factors that are beyond the understanding of any algorithm. The main task of using artificial intelligence is minimizing subjectivism.

However, in our opinion, the sphere of criminal proceedings is the least subject to automation. This is especially true for the decision-making process of the judge. Nevertheless, there are quite successful examples of technologies application for the resolution of criminal law disputes in the world practice. Thus, in China, with the help of artificial intelligence, criminal cases are resolved in such categories as murder, robbery, rape and attempted state security. In addition, DARE system, developed in the United States, is also of interest. It is set to recognize false witness statements based on the assessment of a person's voice, facial expressions, speech, and other behavioral characteristics.

Also, in the United States, electronic document management and PredPol system are applied. The PredPol system uses information about the behavior of individuals to assess the likelihood of repetition of crimes. At the same time, a person against whom a court decision was made using digital technologies has the right to get acquainted with the algorithm on the basis of which a "smart decision" was made (Novikova, 2020). In our opinion, this condition should become mandatory for all countries using automated justice systems.

In addition to the systems mentioned above, the USA widely uses COMPAS (Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions) and PSA (Public Safety Assessment) systems. COMPAS can predict re-offending rate, the risk of violent recidivism and contempt of a court using various personal data. PSA bases its forecasts on nine risk factors: age at current arrest, current violent offense, current violent offense & 20 years old or younger, pending charge at the time of the offense, prior Disorderly Persons conviction, prior indictable conviction, prior conviction, prior violent conviction, prior failure to appear pre-trial in past 2 years, prior failure to appear pre-trial older than 2 years, prior sentence to incarceration.

Then it weighs each of these factors and performs a risk assessment that serves to predict the likelihood of repetition of a crime or refusal to go to trial. The advantage of PSA is that it makes its algorithm public, publishing the factors and methods used, which allows the judge to conduct his/her own analysis and make a final decision on his own (Dupont, Stevens, Westermann, Joyce, 2019).

An electronic register of criminal cases is being maintained in Kazakhstan and these materials are being digitized. Moreover, it is not necessary to have an electronic signature, the registration of which may cause difficulties for individuals and restrict their rights. Instead, you can use a signature tablet, which is a specialized peripheral device consisting of a graphic tablet and a writing pen (stylus), which makes it possible to create a digital analogue of the handwritten signature of its owner.

In addition, since 2019, a project on the introduction of artificial intelligence for predicting court decisions has been implemented in Kazakhstan. It is assumed that if it is difficult to make a decision, the judge will turn to this system for help. Upon request, it will form 10 best court cases, similar to the one that the judge considered. However, there is no case law in Kazakhstan, so it is unclear exactly how the judge will use the information received (Sushina and Sobenin, 2019).

In Germany, an electronic database with digitized criminal case materials is being made, which allows speeding up the process of acquainting the defender with the case which he receives through his/her special electronic mailbox. The possibility of submitting electronic documents related to criminal proceedings is also provided for in Estonia (Bryantseva and Soldatkina, 2019). Moreover, the applicant can apply to law enforcement agencies remotely. For person's identification, he/she needs to log in the e-toimik system using an ID card or mobiil-ID –identification of an individual via a mobile phone (Vilkovaa and Maslennikova, 2019).

Such systems help to optimize the process of exposure, investigation of crimes and resolution of criminal cases, as well as to eliminate bias in decision-making. For example, in his study Shai Danziger found that positive decisions of Israeli judges increase to $\sim 65\%$ after lunch breaks and gradually decrease to 0% by the next break (Danziger *et al.*, 2011). In this situation, there is a psychological factor that needs to be minimized.

It should be noted that in countries where artificial intelligence is used to make a final decision on a case, a priority is still given to the judge who passes the sentence. The automated system only offers possible options for resolving the dispute, one of which can be chosen by the judge. In this case, such systems act as assistants and kind of advisers to judges.

In equal measure, the advantage and disadvantage of an automated decision-making system is the absence of a subjective factor. A certain algorithm can calculate the strength and number of arguments, attributing the value of the initial reasons to probabilities and establishing the strength of internal logical connections. However, some scientists still recognize that in many real cases, the subjective confidence and intuition of the subject of evaluation plays the main role in establishing information.

Moreover, according to the Russian law, a judge must evaluate evidence according to his/her inner conviction, guided by the law and conscience (part 1 of Article 17 of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Russian Federation). Decision-making is significantly influenced by the life and professional experience of a judge, which the automated system does not have. According to Professor A.V. Tyaglo, the determination of individual evidence probabilities and the forces of probabilistic connections within the argumentation can to some extent be attributed to the discretionary powers of the investigator and the judge, that is, it can be argued that discretion has a significant intuitive basis (Tyaglo, 2013). In fact, when making a decision, only mathematical calculation is not enough, especially when imposing a sentence.

For instance, Professor Ya. I. Gilinsky adheres to the position that no technology can completely eliminate judicial errors. Moreover, the court solves questions about the actions of people with all their individualized life and psychological nuances that cannot be taken into account with the help of technology. Of course, judges can use the solution proposed by an automated system, but will this not be an encroachment on their independence? (Gilinsky. 2020).

The principle of independence of judges allows them to resolve emerging conflicts based on their own belief in the legality and validity of the decision they make. When performing their duties, judges must obey only the Constitution of the Russian Federation and federal legislation. No one has the right to interfere in the decision-making process of a judge, and all non-procedural appeals to judges on this matter are prohibited by law.

A judge should not "adapt" to someone's opinion, he needs to make a legal, reasonable and fair decision, which will contribute to the restoration of legal order in society. Judges need to abstract from external factors and try to make more objective decisions based on the law (Mikhailovskaya, 2010). With the introduction of robot judges, decision-making algorithms that will be built to some extent on the basis of existing judicial practice will not meet this principle.

It is noted that the practice of electronic courts appearance, including private ones, which has begun to spread, can negatively affect the independence and impartiality of judges. The introduction of such a system on a permanent basis will cause the need to develop requirements for technical characteristics and the mechanism for the administration of justice by a robot judge, as well as the legal basis for its functioning.

Moreover, it is not entirely clear how the adversarial principle that assumes equal procedural rights and obligations of the parties, will be implemented. This may negatively affect the defense side, whose participants are still not full-fledged subjects of proof (Kozyavin and Chistilina, 2016).

In 2018, the Council of Europe developed "Ethical principles concerning the use of artificial intelligence in judicial systems": 1) the principle of respect for fundamental rights; 2) the principle of non-discrimination (between individuals or groups of individuals); 3) the principle of quality and security (the use of reliable information storage and processing systems); 4) the principle of transparency, impartiality and reliability; 5) the principle of user control ("European Ethical Charter on the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in judicial systems and their environment" (adopted at the 31st plenary session of the CEPEJ (Strasbourg, December 3-4, 2018).

Some of these principles are difficult to implement. For example, the principle of non-discrimination is often violated. For example, COMPAS system assigns a high risk of crime repetition to African-Americans - twice as often as to the others within two years after sentencing (Sushina and Sobenin, 2019). The third and fourth principles are more related to the reliability of automated systems use and their versatility. In our opinion, this is the main obstacle to the introduction of electronic justice. Not all countries are able to provide a reliable system for the protection and provision of personal data.

Also significant is the fact that, the interested party should be able to challenge the scientific validity of artificial intelligence algorithms application, for which they should be available in criminal proceedings not only for the judge, but also for the prosecution and defense parties.

No doubt, such systems have a number of advantages that allow minimizing the subjective factor when making decisions by a law enforcer. But they also have some related problems. Thus, there is a threat to the information security of automated information and telecommunications systems used in courts; there is a need to improve the mechanism for posting information about the activities of courts on official websites, including in the "open data" format.

In addition, free access to data on participants in criminal proceedings, their procedural status and actions will not allow them to fully observe their rights and freedoms. The dissemination of such information can contribute to premature, often erroneous conclusions about the course and outcome of the consideration of a criminal case, which will have a negative social effect for citizens involved in the criminal process, especially for the accused.

According to some researchers in the field of criminal procedure, electronic justice, as an opportunity to provide a solution to a criminal legal dispute to an automated system, is unacceptable. The imperfection of the legislation, its instability significantly complicates the work of the matrix of "electronic scales of justice". In some cases (special regional and ethnic conditions), the intuition and experience of a judge are invaluable, they allow him/her to make a fair decision.

When making a decision, the judge must take into account the specifics of culture, customs and traditions, religious foundations that may affect the type and amount of possible punishment (Duk, 2019). We share this point of view, since it is difficult to imagine that an automated system will be able to take into account all the nuances of the case under consideration. There are no so-called "standard" cases in criminal proceedings. In addition, the desire to individualize criminal responsibility would not allow us to switch to standard decision-making algorithms.

Moreover, the sentence is primarily a creative act of any judge. The introduction of an automated system for making a decision on a criminal case will lead to depersonalization of the final court decision and justice in general.

Digitalization of the criminal process will certainly facilitate the work of preliminary investigation bodies and the court, will speed up the criminal proceedings, ensure the safety of procedural documents in an unchanged form, the effectiveness of monitoring the legality and validity, etc. (Lazareva, 2020). However, a special program is not able to completely replace a person, especially in a situation where it is necessary to make a decision, since it does not have cognitive and emotional competence, and therefore there is a great risk of a formal approach to decision-making.

Conclusion

In our opinion, the digitalization of the criminal process is inevitable. Nevertheless, the question of its application degree remains open. The introduction of some elements of electronic justice, such as electronic criminal case, remote interaction, electronic document management, will have a positive impact on the effectiveness of criminal procedural activities.

However, the complete exclusion of a person from the decision-making mechanism, especially the final decision, will not meet the existing national and international principles of criminal proceedings and may lead to depersonalization of the sentence. The individualization of punishment, which should contribute to correction, will not be implemented, and therefore the deep social idea embedded in the purpose of criminal proceedings and the essence of punishment will lose its meaning.

Nevertheless, the presence of positive features that contribute to the objectification and rationalization of the decision-making process by the judge cannot be an absolute criterion when switching to an automated system. Moreover, the proposals to completely replace the participants in the criminal proceedings with an artificial intelligence system make us think about the moral component of justice.

It is not only a legal, but also a moral duty of a judge to pass a lawful, reasonable and fair sentence. Representatives of this profession, in addition to professional qualities, must also meet certain moral requirements, such as honesty, impartiality, integrity, integrity, tact, politeness, patience, a keen sense of justice, etc. An automated system cannot contain such qualities.

At the same time, borrowing foreign experience of the introduction of artificial intelligence systems into Russian legal practice will optimize some judicial processes. Thus, the widespread use of DARE, PredPol, and prediction of possible court decisions systems will significantly reduce the time and resources spent on decision-making by the subject of law enforcement. At the same time, the advantage of these systems is that the final decision is made by a person, which fully corresponds to the moral component of the criminal procedure.

Thus, the introduction of automated decision-making systems during the criminal process at this stage is premature and, at a minimum, will require the transition to a new system of criminal procedural evidence. However, the use of the latest achievements of science and technology in criminal proceedings fully meets modern requirements, especially in the context of a growing number of cybercrimes.

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CUESTIONES POLÍTICAS

Vol.41 Nº 79

Esta revista fue editada en formato digital y publicada en octubre de 2023, por el Fondo Editorial Serbiluz, Universidad del Zulia. Maracaibo-Venezuela

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