

The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Elections

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ABSTRACT

The digital revolution, characterized by the proliferation of social media and the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI), has significantly impacted the political landscape of every country where free and fair elections are conducted. AI has the potential to affect the elections both positively as well as negatively. It is an opportunity to improve the democratic process in our societies by helping citizens to gain a better understanding of politics and engage more easily in democratic debate. Politicians can also improve their ability to represent the people by getting to know them better. This kind of cooperation between voters and elected officials has the potential to transform political campaigns and significantly enhance the process of formulating public policy, rendering it more precise and effective.

On the other hand, there are certain concerns over the use of AI in politics as it poses multiple risks to democracies like misinformation and disinformation campaigns including deep fakes, the amplification and weaponization of hate speech, micro-targeting of voters, racial and gender stereotyping, AI-driven campaigning and the possibility of aspects of electoral processes being targeted through automated messaging such as political bots and chatbots. These AI-driven disinformation tools have the capacity to distort public opinion, influence voter attitudes, and jeopardise the democratic process itself.

This paper critically examines the influence of AI on elections and democracy and underscores the need for robust regulatory frameworks and digital literacy initiatives to safeguard the democratic ethos in the age of AI.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Elections, Democracy.

1. INTRODUCTION

Engaged voters who use trustworthy information and safe election infrastructure to hold their politicians accountable are essential to a thriving democracy. A democracy must be improved significantly and consistently, and elections are a crucial component of that. Practically speaking, democracy entails giving the electorate the freedom of choice along with a variety of options, such as information on candidates, campaign funding, voting, vote processing, and other topics.

Artificial intelligence (AI) has been a disruptive force in several industries during the digital age, changing the way we communicate, work, and live. Its introduction into politics, especially during elections, marks the beginning of a new era in voter involvement, electoral management, and campaign strategy. There are two sides to this technological advancement, though.

AI presents a chance to enhance our countries' democratic processes. For instance, it can make it easier for citizens to participate in democratic discourse and help them understand politics better. Politicians can also improve their ability to represent the people by getting to know them better. A political and public alliance of this kind might transform elections and greatly enhance the process of formulating public policy, making it more precise and effective. While concerns about AI in politics have existed since the

late 2010s, their relevance to democracies and the electoral process in particular has increased with the technology's recent development.²

The advent of new technology puts democracies at danger in several ways. First, it can spread misinformation and disinformation, which can inflame emotions and lead to violence or conflict over elections. For instance, AI can produce misleading information, propagate bias, or hold views that are not representative of the public. All in all, AI can negatively impact the democratic process despite its advantages.

Despite the above risks, AI can prove useful to democracies if proper safeguards are applied and strategies are formulated to mitigate its negative impacts. AI is the future of all of us, but Democracy in every country cannot be compromised with the advancement in new technologies.

2. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND POLITICAL CAMPAIGNINGS

The advent of artificial intelligence (AI) has significantly transformed the landscape of political campaigns, introducing a new era of data-driven strategies that have reshaped how candidates reach and influence voters. At the heart of this transformation is the utilization of AI for sophisticated data analysis, voter targeting, personalized messaging, and optimization of campaign strategies. AI could then be used to generate personalised emails or text messages from chatbots to specific audiences. The other side of the coin is that such an understanding allows to very precisely target one's audience, meaning that politicians could eventually target specific groups of voters, among them swing voters.¹

Globally, the use of AI and big data analytics in elections and campaigns has had a significant impact on democratic politics. Political parties are increasingly using big data analytics to build detailed, behavioural, and psychometric voter profiles. These voter profiles are then used to categorise voters into interest groups so that targeted political content can be delivered to them, as the 2018 case involving Facebook and Cambridge Analytica demonstrated. This is an example of "computational politics," which is the use of computational techniques on sizable datasets obtained from offline and online sources of information to conduct outreach, mobilisation, and persuasion campaigns in support of, against, or in opposition to candidates, laws, or policies. Beyond political manipulation, computational politics also results in massive information asymmetries between political parties and citizens. The algorithmic curation of news and stories create information silos and echo chambers on social media; such filter bubbles that can act as a form of 'invisible propaganda' to manipulate public opinion.²

Further, while appearing gimmicky in nature, 'AI politicians'- have also been created for running for elections in Russia, Japan and New Zealand. The logic of these AI politicians seems to rest on the notion of efficacy and a perceived accuracy resulting from a high degree of computational power that AI algorithms offer. For instance, making an appeal to voters, SAM the AI politician that has been in use in New Zealand states: "My memory is infinite, so I will never forget or ignore what you tell me. Unlike a human politician, I consider everyone's position, without bias, when making decisions... I will change over time to reflect the issues that the people of New Zealand care about most." While AI politicians seem like a distant proposition, the principle on which AI politicians are based is already in practice. Algorithmic decision making, being used in various processes are lending way to the increasing growth of 'algorithmic

¹ Ibid.

² Urvashi Aneja, Angelina Chamuah and Abishek Reddy K, 'Artificial Intelligence and Democracy' (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung India, May 2020) < <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/indien/16206.pdf> > accessed 16 February 2024

authority' - that is, the increasing power given to algorithmic processes to adjudicate and guide human action.³

Bots and computational propaganda disseminated modified content widely on social media during the 2016 US presidential election, hardening opinions and forming narratives. The presidential campaign of Donald Trump was able to microtarget and reduce opposition turnout with hyper-targeted advertisements that were based on stolen data. Propaganda and disinformation strategies have clearly changed voter opinions and turnout, impacting election results. An AI-powered robocall posing as US President Joe Biden was played during last month's New Hampshire primary, discouraging voters from casting ballots and advising them to hold off until November. While the whole effects of this incident are still unknown, there are significant potential hazards because the US currently has a "primary problem" in which a small percentage of eligible voters cast ballots to select candidates for the general election. While it is simple to hold less educated and less wealthy voters responsible for falling for disinformation campaigns, it is crucial to understand that maintaining the stereotype of the "dumb voter" not only marginalises particular social strata but also helps populist politicians get support.⁴

Deepfakes represent a more sophisticated form of AI-generated disinformation, involving the creation of highly realistic video and audio recordings that can make it appear as though individuals are saying or doing things they never did. In the context of elections, deepfake technology can be used to produce counterfeit videos of political figures making controversial statements or engaging in inappropriate conduct. The realism of deepfakes poses a significant challenge to electoral integrity, as they can severely damage reputations, manipulate voter perceptions, and sow discord among the electorate. Moreover, deepfakes are not a class issue—even huge company CEOs are susceptible to easy AI deepfake scams that generate voices. The dissemination of false information during a critical political process through the use of deceptive deepfake technology provides a preview of how AI could be strategically weaponized, if left unchecked, to cause confusion and affect election results. The Biden robocall incident should serve as a global alert for democracies to implement security measures and provide their citizenry with greater media literacy training. The prevalence of fake news and deepfakes during Indian elections has raised critical questions about their impact on voter perceptions and electoral outcomes. In the lead-up to the 2019 elections, there were alarming incidents of misinformation spreading like wildfire on social media platforms. In order to prepare for similar attacks on their elections, Southeast Asian nations would benefit from keeping an eye on the events leading up to the US presidential election. The February 14 general election in Indonesia and deepfakes may teach us some valuable lessons. The Indonesian General Elections Commission's laissez-faire attitude towards the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in campaigns, which left voters to sort through fabricated material on their own, was one unexpected feature of the election. This ought to have raised warning flags because deepfakes driven by artificial intelligence have already plagued Indonesia. Examples of these included fake health claims purportedly made by the former Minister of Health and a deepfake film featuring the late President Suharto pleading with voters to support Golkar candidates. With the advent of AI-driven propaganda, the Indonesian election of 2024 offered a chance to watch and examine how AI is being used to spread misinformation and political propaganda. Other Southeast Asian nations will find value in the knowledge gathered about the AI technologies used, the kind of false information disseminated, the consequences of the KPU's non-interventionist approach,

³ Biplav Srivastava, Anita Nikolic, Tarmo Koppel, 'AI and elections: An introduction to the special issue' (AI Magazine, 16 August 2023) <<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/aaai.12110>>accessed 14 February 2024

⁴ Ibid

and the efficacy of preventative measures like the recently released AI Ethics Circular by Indonesia's Ministry of Communication and Information (KOMINFO). The knowledge gained could be useful in developing plans to protect each of their different electoral procedures.⁵

Campaign apps are increasingly used to collect, analyse and store a range of information about people, such as: residence status, caste, political preference, who people are likely to vote for, and how they rate the party of their choice. Apps also provide more personal information such as photographs, telephone numbers, household data, the number of government welfare schemes availed, and the amount received in state subsidies. Some accounts suggest that political parties may have used government beneficiary data collected through its Seva Mitra app to target voters in India. Parties are primarily using audio-video content to increase accessibility for a larger number of users. For example, political parties are increasingly looking to TikTok, which boasts of over 200 million users, to reach new voters, particularly the youth.⁶ Social media bots are more complex, using artificial intelligence to chat with people. They can aggregate the sentiment in a polarised discussion and maybe even further polarise it.” The use of bots on social media, can not only polarise the political discourse, but also provide the false appearance of public support (or lack of) when there is none. It has been found that “roughly 400,000 bots were engaged in the political discussion about the Presidential election in the U.S. in 2016, responsible for roughly 3.8 million tweets, and about one-fifth of the entire conversation”.⁷

The individualised and easily accessible internet services are very beneficial to those who have had difficulty connecting or having their opinions heard. In addition to helping them see themselves and express their personalities, using digital products for communication. Personalisation of content and messaging can also represent a sense of inclusion and empowerment. AI methods such as Natural Language Processing (NLP), as seen in the case of voice-based internet search applications in India also enable personalisation and participation despite literacy barriers. For example, Interactive Voice Response Systems (IVRS) are increasingly used to reach voters from rural areas with low levels of literacy; voters receive pre-recorded automated IVRS calls of politicians reciting their election manifesto or discussing local issues. This may lead voters to believe that politicians are personally invested in their problems. Similarly, social media provides a means for a large part of the population previously excluded from political processes, to participate. Political memes are for example an important means of political expression and subversion, enabling a new form of political participation that was not available previously.⁸

3. FAVOURABLE IMPACT ON ELECTIONS

AI can be used to teach voters the fundamentals of democracy, whether it is by learning about a policy problem or becoming acquainted with a politician's position. Political recommender systems, for example, might serve as the foundation for a chatbot that answers inquiries from the public about the election platforms of candidates. Additionally, specifically created AI tools could inform citizens about the changes in regulations that affect them and enable them to more effectively voice their opinions to politicians and

⁵ Karryl Sagun-Trajano, Nuurrianti Jalli, ‘AI and Elections: Lessons for Southeast Asia’ (RSIS Commentary, 16 February 2024) < <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/CO24023.pdf> > accessed 18 February 2024

⁶ Urvashi Aneja, Angelina Chamuah and Abishek Reddy K, ‘Artificial Intelligence and Democracy’ (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung India, May 2020) < <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/indien/16206.pdf> > accessed 16 February 2024

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Urvashi Aneja, Angelina Chamuah and Abishek Reddy K, ‘Artificial Intelligence and Democracy’ (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung India, May 2020) <<https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/indien/16206.pdf>> accessed 16 February 2024

governments. AI's ability to moderate large-scale political chat rooms could lead to better civic discourse. AI has the potential to automatically summarise participant viewpoints, moderate the discussion by spotting conflicts and gently guiding participants away from insults and attacks, and even serve as a consensus builder.

On the politician's side, AI can be helpful in summarising citizens' comments made during public consultations or received by email. Feedback could be classified according to various criteria, helping politicians gain a better understanding of citizens' views, especially if combined with human expertise. Politicians might then utilise AI to provide customised responses for the people. According to a study, as long as appropriate disclosure of AI use is made and human oversight is ensured, such use of AI does not erode citizens' trust. The literature in political science acknowledges that public participation improves democracy. It would thus be desirable to open up scope for citizens to engage with political affairs, instead of relying entirely on an elite of political representatives chosen through sporadic elections.

One of the barriers to greater citizen participation is the overwhelming amount of data pertaining to the performance of government ministries, in different languages, and with different performance metrics. Machine Learning applications could be developed to analyse these large, diverse, and unstructured datasets; to effectively extract and classify information; and provide a more comprehensible and accessible analysis. AI's ability to understand and translate different natural language texts can further help traverse vernacular barriers. Additionally, AI's ability to understand audio-video data can help overcome literacy boundaries for participation. Audio-video content allows for easier, quicker, and richer capture of information reducing the effort and time of citizen participation, enabling even an illiterate person to contribute in the form of audio-video data.⁹ AI technologies can also be very helpful in gathering information from public blogs, forums, and the media. They can also assist policy makers in identifying hot-button problems and public opinion, which can have a significant impact on the formulation and execution of policies. Machine learning in particular, and AI-based technologies in general, can play a significant role in bringing civil society and public administration closer together by enabling individuals to work together on stable, predictable problems for which gathering vast amounts of data is comparatively simple.

In conclusion, the benefits and efficiencies brought about by AI in political campaigning are transformative, enabling more personalized voter engagement, strategic resource allocation, real-time adaptability, efficiency in outreach, and accuracy in targeting and messaging. These advancements present a promising future for the democratic process, where technology empowers campaigns to connect with voters in more meaningful ways. However, as we harness these benefits, it is crucial to remain vigilant about the potential misuse of AI, ensuring that its application in political campaigns serves to enhance, rather than undermine, the integrity of elections.

4. NEGATIVE IMPACT ON ELECTIONS

The amplification and weaponization of hate speech, voter microtargeting, racial and gender stereotyping, misinformation and disinformation campaigns, and deep fakes are some of the vulnerabilities that have been identified in AI and political competition and elections that should be addressed. However, AI also creates opportunities for participatory democracy, such as improved voter education and mobilisation. AI-

⁹ Urvashi Aneja, Angelina Chamuah and Abishek Reddy K, 'Artificial Intelligence and Democracy' (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung India, May 2020) < <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/indien/16206.pdf> > accessed 16 February 2024

driven campaigning and the potential for electoral procedures to be unintentionally manipulated by automated messaging systems like chatbots and political bots.¹⁰

In Election Processes, Chatbots, AI-generated voice, or videos could be used to spread false information about time, manner, or place of voting via text, email, social media channels, or print. The scale and persuasiveness of foreign influence operations and disinformation efforts aimed at electoral processes may be increased by the use of AI-generated material and tools. Artificial intelligence (AI) could be used to create believable phoney election records. The advent of interactive chatbots, which can tailor interactions based on voter attributes and also modify manipulation tactics in real time and apply them to a multiplicity of users, might make disinformation campaigns even more effective. Such AI models could be conceived as anthropomorphised tools and generate content that simulates human emotions to manipulate the user. Generally, AI presents an important manipulative potential, as users may not be able to distinguish between human and AI-generated content. Researchers demonstrated AI's power of persuasion by showing that across different topics, AI generated messages were at least as persuasive as human-generated messages, and that users are even more likely to trust tweets generated by AI than content written by humans.¹¹

In Election Offices, Voice cloning tools could be used to impersonate election office staff to gain access to sensitive election administration or security information. Use of AI tools could enable higher quality spear phishing attacks against election officials or staff to gain access to sensitive information. Malware and possibly even upgraded malware that might more easily elude detection systems could be created using AI coding tools. Artificial intelligence (AI) scripts and voice cloning could be used to produce phoney voter calls in order to flood contact centres.¹²

With the development of new applications of AI, such as the creation of deepfakes and digital avatars, it is now increasingly difficult to distinguish between reality and fiction and to trust one's own judgement and experience. The growing spectre of misinformation, and the blurring of boundaries between what is 'real' or 'fake' undermines the possibility of free and informed democratic engagement, or the very idea of deliberative democracy.¹³

AI provides adversaries with a vast array of tools to sway public opinion. First, AI can help to observe the information environment and understand the emerging social fissures. The network analysis capabilities of AI can also be used to better target an audience and establish the profile of voters, in what is known as political micro-targeting. AI can dramatically increase the speed at which content is made, while also offering access to a wealth of resources. Consequently, this could give rise to entire fake-news websites posing as news outlets. New AI tools also make it possible to generate images from text or to clone a person's voice.¹⁴

A range of computational techniques, loosely clubbed together as Big Data and AI, are thus enabling new and enhanced ways of micro-targeting voters and manipulating public opinion, manufacturing consent for particular ideologies and sharpening political lines through the amplification of filter bubbles. While Big

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Cybersecurity & infrastructure security agency, 'RISK IN FOCUS: GENERATIVE AI AND THE 2024 ELECTION CYCLE' (Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency, January 18, 2024) <https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/2024-01/Consolidated_Risk_in_Focus_Gen_AI_ElectionsV2_508c.pdf> accessed 17 March 2024

¹² Cybersecurity & infrastructure security agency, 'RISK IN FOCUS: GENERATIVE AI AND THE 2024 ELECTION CYCLE' (Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency, January 18, 2024) <https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/2024-01/Consolidated_Risk_in_Focus_Gen_AI_ElectionsV2_508c.pdf> accessed 17 March 2024

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Ibid

Data analytics has been in use in elections, both globally, and in India, AI-based algorithms and systems are also increasingly being adopted, paving the way for more sophisticated technologies of persuasion and manipulation, which are more difficult to detect. The increasing use of AI in the case of social media bots, for political campaigning, adds a layer of sophistication to the technology, which makes it more difficult to detect.¹⁵

Deepfake videos are getting easier to produce and are becoming more and more convincing, to the point that text-to-video is described as the upcoming breakthrough in generative AI. Deepfakes have the ability to spread misinformation (false or inaccurate information) or even disinformation (information intended to mislead), especially when they are used to create funny videos and memes, which both have a high likelihood of becoming viral online. Politicians are the main potential target of deepfakes, especially when they do not have the resources to protect their online presence. Deepfakes pose a serious threat to public confidence in the information environment overall. They also may make it easier for some politicians to dodge responsibility for their real words, on the pretext of having fallen victim to AI-generated content. The breakthrough in generative AI raises concerns regarding influence campaigns, as it will now require less human and financial resources to conduct large-scale disinformation campaigns. Deepfake videos and other AI-generated content could be used to harass, pose as, or undermine election authorities. Artificial intelligence (AI) techniques have the potential to create audio or video files that mimic election authorities and mislead the public about the security or integrity of the electoral process. AI skills could be applied to improve data aggregation for public information, allowing for the possibility of doxing election officials. The advanced usage of social engineering and phishing techniques is made possible by AI-generated technology. A fake movies featuring an election vendor making a fraudulent claim might be produced using AI-generated tools, raising concerns about the security of election technology.¹⁶

Politicians usually perceive mails and correspondence from their constituents as an expression of public opinion on which they can act. The development of AI has made it feasible to run astroturf campaigns, in which a tiny group offers a distorted image of popular opinion while acting as a legitimate grassroots movement. Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the potential to produce fraudulent letters with the intention of influencing lawmakers. An experiment showed that legislators found AI-generated text they received on six policy areas almost as credible as human-written messages. AI might potentially be used to post millions of automatically created content entries on a topic online, giving the appearance of political consensus..

In fact, there are evidences that Bots—autonomous accounts programmed to spread messages to create the illusion of public support - have been used in elections in the USA, Germany, the UK , France, and Brazil, to cite just a few Cyber troops aim to manipulate citizens during election campaigns by swaying public discourse and distorting political feeling through the use of AI-powered tools. Furthermore, AI-based technologies have the potential to create "filter bubbles" through the "resonance effect," which is the result of personalised recommendations that are progressively reinforced through repetition. Such

¹⁵ Urvashi Aneja, Angelina Chamuah and Abishek Reddy K, 'Artificial Intelligence and Democracy' (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung India, May 2020) < <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/indien/16206.pdf> > accessed 21 February 2024

¹⁶ Urvashi Aneja, Angelina Chamuah and Abishek Reddy K, 'Artificial Intelligence and Democracy' (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung India, May 2020) < <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/indien/16206.pdf> > accessed 20 February 2024

widespread and extensive use of deceptive techniques can lead to societal division and provide room for behaviour that is harsh in both the digital and real worlds, undermining social cohesiveness.¹⁷

5. IMPACT OF AI ON ELECTIONS IN INDIA

In its simplest form, democracy is based on the presumption that people are free and rational beings capable of making decisions as a group about their common good and the political representation that might serve to reflect and fulfil this ideal. The reality of democracy is however difficult in a country like India, whose founding as a democracy coincided with its emergence as a nation state. In contrast to the progressive spread of democracy in European governments, democracy in India did not grow through institutionalisation and universal suffrage. As a result, many democratic institutions and processes in India are underdeveloped or ineffective, and they may also be less able to withstand the disruptive power of artificial intelligence.¹⁸

What stands out within the Indian context is the rapid increase in mobile and internet connectivity over the past 10 years, Further, a growing number of these users are from non-metro cities and rural areas. Many of these users lack basic literacy, including digital and media literacy, as well as an understanding of these systems of algorithmic curation.

The combination of Big Data and AI analytics, led to the 2019 General elections being dubbed India's 'big data election', where AI algorithms were used to understand voter preferences and the political sentiments of users through the use of social media platforms and apps. Politicians across party lines and states began to use social media for political campaigning, significantly increasing their budgets for digital campaigning. Mahua Moitra, a Member of Parliament from West Bengal, remarked that the 2019 election was fought on fake news, not real issues: "This election was not fought on the plank of farmer distress. This election was not fought on unemployment. This election was fought on WhatsApp, on fake news, on manipulating minds." Targeted political messaging is however not new. Twitter serves as an official spokesperson for politicians; Instagram and Youtube are used by social media teams with sophistication in aesthetics and videography to amplify the message; and WhatsApp serves mainly as a channel for spreading last mile communication from election workers themselves rather than party leaders.¹⁹

Political campaigning through social media platforms also allows parties to skirt around election regulations. For example, even though parties are not allowed to campaign in the last 48 hours, these restrictions do not extend to social media platforms. Similarly, while the election commission has placed caps on advertising, parties now spend money on boosting Facebook posts and ensuring their content trends on other social media platforms. The contextual hybridity of India's media environment facilitates the dissemination of political communication and content and allows internet messaging to seep into offline spaces. Both online and offline strategies are used in combination to increase the scope and effectiveness of targeted political campaigning. Targeted political messaging as well as false political content is delivered to people and groups who have been segregated on the basis of demographic data, such as age, religion, caste, occupation, and party affiliation.²⁰

¹⁷ Paulo savaget and others, 'Empowering political participation through artificial intelligence' [2019] 46(3) Science and Public Policy <<https://academic.oup.com/spp/article/46/3/369/5161215>> accessed 17 March 2024

¹⁸ Urvashi Aneja, Angelina Chamuah and Abishek Reddy K, 'Artificial Intelligence and Democracy' (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung India, May 2020) <<https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/indien/16206.pdf>> accessed 16 February 2024

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Ibid

AI technology have been utilised to eliminate language barriers in India, a diverse nation with 22 official languages and many more in usage. In addition to assisting voters in becoming more knowledgeable about important political issues during election campaigns, these technologies can also help people "overcome regional parochialism, local prejudice, and national chauvinism" and raise more voices so that elected officials will hear their concerns.²¹

In the upcoming 2024 Lok Sabha elections, recent incidents of AI use in the Indian political sphere can easily be seen which can set dangerous precedent for future campaigns: with politicians themselves employing what is popularly known as 'deepfake' to communicate with voters. On 21 January, 2024, the late M Karunanidhi 'told' a DMK youth wing meeting in Salem about the Centre's suppression of state's rights in an AI-generated video. After two days, appeared in another fake video.²² With deepfake election campaigns, we are entering an era where it's going to be increasingly difficult to trust what we see and hear online. Even substandard video editing has caused violence in a nation like India where digital literacy is still in its infancy. The further difficulties in regulating deepfakes, and the use of AI within politics more broadly, is the benefit that politicians stand to gain from the use of these techniques.²³

Over the past decade, there has been a growing emphasis on leveraging ICT for good governance, as manifested in the Digital India program. AI is being imagined to further this objective and enable efficient and responsive delivery of public services.²⁴ A more efficient system would be much more dangerous for social sorting, privacy, and democratic participation.

6. ROBUST MEASURES TO MITIGATE THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF AI

The advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in political campaigns has brought about revolutionary changes in how electoral strategies are formulated and executed. While the benefits of AI in enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of campaigns are undeniable, the potential for misuse necessitates robust measures to ensure transparency and accountability. To mitigate the negative impacts of AI on elections and uphold the integrity of democratic processes, the following recommendations are proposed:

- To empower citizens and mitigate the impact of AI-driven misinformation, digital literacy initiatives must take center stage. It is crucial to educate the public about deepfakes, fake news, and AI. Such initiatives should equip individuals with the knowledge and skills to critically assess the information they encounter online.²⁵
- Political campaigns should be required to disclose when and how they are using AI technologies. This includes the use of AI for data analysis, voter targeting, personalized messaging, and strategy optimization. There should be clear guidelines and regulations for AI-generated content, such as deepfakes and synthetic media, used in political campaigns. Establishing oversight bodies with the authority to monitor, audit, and sanction political campaigns that misuse AI technologies is essential for ensuring accountability. Governments and electoral authorities should collaborate with technology

²¹ Paulo savaget and others, 'Empowering political participation through artificial intelligence' [2019] 46(3) Science and Public Policy <<https://academic.oup.com/spp/article/46/3/369/5161215>> accessed 17 March 2024

²² MK Narayanan, 'Many elections, AI's dark dimension' (The Hindu, March 18) <<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/many-elections-ais-dark-dimension/article67961995.ece>> accessed 20 March 2024

²³ Mayank tomar and others, 'THE ROLE OF AI-DRIVEN TOOLS IN SHAPING THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS: A STUDY OF INDIAN ELECTIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA DYNAMICS' [November 2023] 52(11) Industrial Engineering Journal 143-153

²⁴ Urvashi Aneja, Angelina Chamuah and Abishek Reddy K, 'Artificial Intelligence and Democracy' (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung India, May 2020) <<https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/indien/16206.pdf>> accessed 16 February 2024

²⁵ Ibid

companies to establish guidelines and tools for identifying and mitigating the misuse of AI in political campaigns. Implement ethical guidelines and responsible AI development practices to ensure that AI algorithms do not inadvertently reinforce bias, discrimination, or polarization.²⁶

- Establish a clear and strong legal framework on AI that ensures respect for freedom of expression online and offline, privacy and the right to participate in public affairs, in line with international standards agreed upon in international and regional treaties. Regulations should enshrine the key principles of accountability and transparency as well as promulgate the privacy-preserving access for researchers.
- Ensure that not only state organs, but also businesses operating under their territorial jurisdiction respect human rights, as per the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.
- Ensure that the fundamental right to privacy is respected online. Without authorization, personal information should not be utilised for any reason, including microtargeting and political advertising. Cross-platform tracking and default permission to third-party companies ought to be outlawed. Comprehensive data protection laws must be implemented and enforced and any loopholes that could be exploited by political campaigns should be closed. It is also important to put in place measures to enforce detailed and timely reporting to electoral authorities on campaign financing and advertising.²⁷
- Support the use of AI to combat disinformation, for instance through publicly financed, certified and controlled social bots that could undertake automated analysis of online content, accompanied by human curation to verify content. Ensure that the use of these tools is transparent and consistent with human rights obligations, including by putting in place the necessary safeguards so that they are not dependent of any political party, candidate or interest group.²⁸
- Commit to the creation of open interoperability standards for content moderation, developed jointly with all stakeholders involved that permit the deployment of open-source AI-tools to: a) assistance in identifying stuff that is factually incorrect, b) let users know about it, c) raise awareness of accurate information, and d) increase the diversity of political speech by preventing echo chambers and filter bubbles from being used.²⁹
- There is a need of establishing global standards for AI in Elections. international forums, conferences, and working groups dedicated to AI and elections can foster ongoing dialogue and collaboration. These platforms provide opportunities for policymakers, election officials, technologists, and civil society to exchange ideas, share best practices, and coordinate efforts to address the multifaceted challenges of AI in electoral contexts.³⁰

By implementing these strategies, democracies can strengthen the cybersecurity of their election systems against AI-powered threats, ensuring that elections remain free, fair, and secure.

²⁶ Urvashi Aneja, Angelina Chamuah and Abishek Reddy K, 'Artificial Intelligence and Democracy' (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung India, May 2020) < <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/indien/16206.pdf> > accessed 16 February 2024

²⁷ Armin Rabitsch, Rania Wazir and Thomas Treml, 'POLICY PAPER on Artificial Intelligence's (AI) Impact on Freedom of Expression in Political Campaign and Elections' (OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Spotlight on Artificial Intelligence and Freedom of Expression, April 2021) < <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/a/3/483638.pdf> > accessed 28 February 2024

²⁸ Mayank tomar and others, 'THE ROLE OF AI-DRIVEN TOOLS IN SHAPING THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS: A STUDY OF INDIAN ELECTIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA DYNAMICS' [November 2023] 52(11) Industrial Engineering Journal 143-153

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Ibid

7. CONCLUSION

AI has the power to profoundly change democracy, either positively or negatively. Put another way, it can be utilised more often for purposes that are beneficial and detrimental, and the general public may view the results differently. The potential of AI to revolutionize political campaigns, enhance voter engagement, and streamline electoral strategies is undeniable. However, alongside these benefits, AI harbors the capacity to undermine the very foundation of our democratic institutions through the spread of disinformation, the manipulation of voter behaviour, and the introduction of cybersecurity vulnerabilities. There is voter manipulation and also legal and regulatory hurdles which present a complex landscape that demands immediate and concerted action. It shows there is a need of robust measures to mitigate the negative impact of AI. The role of policymakers, technologists, civil society, and voters is paramount in this endeavour. We can lessen the detrimental effects of artificial intelligence on our elections and make sure that the nation's voters continue to control the future of our democratic processes by working together, being innovative, and maintaining our unwavering dedication to democratic ideals.