

AI and Democracy

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A universal transition

- Evidence from over 50 countries shows that A.I. has had an impact on elections
- In elections held in 2024 alone, A.I. was used in more than 80%
- But how are these tools being used?
Do they actually pose any threats to democracy and independent political thinking?



How
AI is
being
used

PERSONAL CANDIDATE USE

REACH AND MOTIVATE VOTERS

DEEPFAKES TO MISLEAD VOTERS

Threat to democracy

A.I. poses a threat to democratic integrity, political trust, and opposing party toleration when used in nefarious ways:

- **deepfakes used to clone candidates or broadcasts**
- **presenting false and misleading information about candidates and institutions**
- **eroding public trust in political news and systems**
- **amplify social and partisan divisions, intensifying polarization**

While some forms of A.I. use in campaigns and elections can be harmless and efficient, these technologies pose serious threats to democracy that must be accounted for

Examples of positive uses:

- **personal candidate use to identify potential voters, translate speeches**
- **improve representative politics and citizen participation**
- **empowering less-resourced campaigns**
- **improving ad effectiveness**
- **targeting specific audiences**



Canada A.I.-generated image



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A hard-to-solve problem

Even after realizing the consequences that A.I. can have on democratic processes, this problem is not easy to solve.

- Anonymity of users abusing A.I.
- Difficulty distinguishing A.I.-generated content from reality
- Scale; the convenience of A.I. tools can produce misleading information quickly, cheaply, and on a widespread scale
- Power; efforts from autocratic countries seeking to interfere in foreign elections

What we've seen

These harms are not just theoretical. Below are some of the many examples of the effects that A.I. can have on politics:

- Romania: A court found that A.I. influence from a Russian operation nullified last year's election results
- India: cloning political candidates → common practice in recent years
- Russian campaign: promoted anti-Ukrainian sentiment with fake videos suggesting planned attacks

According to the International Panel on the Information Environment's survey, AI had a harmful role in 69% of political cases they studied



What can be done?

- Individual awareness and skepticism
- Push for stronger regulation governing A.I. content, particularly in political arenas
 - transparency rules
 - explicit regulations on acceptable use
 - punishment for the spread of false messaging

While it is important to be informed and aware in how we consume media personally, this issue exists at on a universal scale, and requires explicit policies and regulations to prevent further consequences to democracy.

References

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