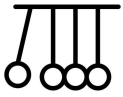


AI Political Propaganda 2025: How Elections Are Being Manipulated

POLITICS

YAĞMUR ZELAL AYDIN



Abstract

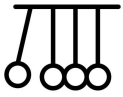
Rapid and significant advances in artificial intelligence (AI) have profoundly shaped the current technological landscape and have generated extraordinary curiosity in academia and beyond. As of 2025, artificial intelligence has emerged as an undeniable player in political communication and relations, changing disinformation tactics as well as election campaign strategies. Considered an unprecedented revolutionary technology, it continues to attract the attention of researchers, scholars, and professionals from various disciplines, as it offers transformative prospects in a wide range of fields. This technological advancement has triggered a broad debate on its social, ethical, and economic implications, and has raised important questions that require deep interdisciplinary investigations. Therefore, AI is emerging as a constantly evolving discipline with critical implications for the future of human progress. While many observers see it as an opportunity to pursue common societal goals, they have also recognized the potential risks associated with such developments. Its integration into the political context also presents a promising opportunity to enhance the efficiency of political decisions. However, its adoption raises significant challenges that require careful evaluation. It is no secret that, with its ability to analyze complex data, process real-time information, and adapt to individual preferences, AI redefines how political leaders engage with the public and substantially contributes to shaping public opinion. In this context, this article aims to explore in detail the mechanisms of AI-driven political propaganda and highlight its impact on democracy and the global response.

Introduction

AI has become a potent and dangerous political weapon at a time when people are too easily distracted and information spreads faster than fact-checkers can keep up. No longer confined to science fiction and theoretical discussions, artificial intelligence is actively playing a role in influencing voter behavior, public opinion, and even the outcome of democratic elections. In 2025, the nexus between politics and AI is more complex than ever. Generative algorithms are being used by both domestic and foreign political actors to create persuasive fake content, identify and exploit emotional triggers, and target specific individuals with professionally personalized propaganda that appears genuine.

Artificial intelligence-supported applications can microtarget voters with extreme precision and sensitivity, mimic reality, and function at a scale never before possible in political propaganda—unlike traditional methods that rely on broad messaging and have quite limited reach. Meanwhile, public awareness, regulatory frameworks, and detection tools lag far behind, leaving democratic institutions vulnerable to subtle but effective manipulation.

This article examines the changing and influential landscape of AI-powered political propaganda. It begins by outlining the technological mechanisms that make this new type of influence possible, such as deepfakes and AI bots that flood digital platforms with carefully curated narratives. Second, it examines the consequences, such as declining public trust, electoral instability, and increased likelihood of foreign interference. As the distinction



between manipulation and persuasion becomes increasingly blurred, this study raises an important question: Can democracy survive in an age of sophisticated propaganda?

The Mechanisms of AI-driven Political Propaganda

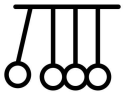
Generative AI in Content Creation

AI opens up new possibilities in electoral campaign dynamics, public policy formulation, and political interaction. Yet, critical assessment is needed to fully understand its implications and challenges in the context of contemporary politics. Indeed, the emergence of AI is shaping a new phase of transformation in politics, going beyond the changes previously introduced by the Internet, such as digital election campaigns and the widespread use of social media (Pacini, 2019; Reale and Tomasi, 2022). The impact of AI on political dynamics creates deeper challenges with important implications for democratic processes. While the



potential of AI to improve human well-being cannot be ignored, its impact on democratic politics is characterized by significant ambiguity. On the other hand, there are legitimate concerns about the use of AI applications that could undermine the foundations of democratic politics. These concerns go beyond mere electoral intervention and touch upon the essence of democratic politics, as well as the interpersonal relationships between

citizens, between citizens and their elected representatives, and between citizens and public institutions tasked with serving and protecting the common good. At this point, it is crucial to highlight a specific concern that requires special attention: the potential of deepfakes—which represent manipulations of facial images, voices, content, or forms of expression generated by AI—to influence democratic elections far beyond the data analysis techniques previously associated with cases such as Cambridge Analytica. In particular, deepfakes have been identified as a significant concern for the stability of our society and the integrity of the political system (Westerlund, 2019). Days before elections, deepfake videos and AI-generated audio—such as those used in Slovakia's 2023 elections and Indonesia's 2024 elections—have been employed to influence public opinion without sufficient time to build support or to create endorsements or scandals. While large language models are used to create convincing political texts that appeal to specific demographics, AI-powered images and memes, commonly known as “slopaganda,” are flooding social media with emotionally charged, manipulated visuals. Furthermore, robocalls using AI-generated audio have been used to trick voters or pose as public figures. The accessibility of these tools—open-source models and commercial platforms now allow even small actors to create persuasive fakes—makes them particularly dangerous. Taken as a whole, these developments signal a move away from



traditional mass communication and toward automated, hyperrealistic, and targeted influence operations, blurring the line between reality and fiction in democratic elections.

Hyper-personalized Propaganda

With advanced AI microtargeting capabilities, campaigns are able to deliver personalized messages to each voter at an individual level, creating an echo chamber that feels authentic and persuasive. Algorithms can segment voters into smaller groups, such as farmers concerned about subsidies or urban professionals concerned about the climate, and then provide them with customized recommendations and ads that speak to their specific issues. AI-powered chatbots have the ability to answer voters' questions using sentiment analysis and update messaging in real time, further improving engagement. Campaigns can use predictive analytics to identify likely voters or persuadables, allocate resources effectively, and even influence turnout by as little as a percentage point—often enough to affect closely contested races.

Bots, Troll Farms, and AI-driven Disinformation Campaigns

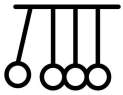
Through automation, mimicry, and scaling, troll farms and AI-powered bots have completely changed how misinformation spreads. With their capability to integrate into online communities, post content related to ongoing discussions, and even react dynamically, these “sleeper” bots are virtually indistinguishable from real users. Campaigns like Russia's Operation Doppelganger use coordinated bot networks and AI-generated clone websites to spread misleading information in major democracies. According to related research, bots use the megaphone effect to give the appearance of consensus by disproportionately amplifying low-credibility content early in its spread.

Manipulation of Public Opinion and Emotions

AI-powered propaganda exploits psychological vulnerabilities by creating emotionally charged content through sentiment analysis that encourages engagement. Posts that trigger anger, fear, or identity-based solidarity are amplified to further polarize and manipulate audiences. Memes and explicit photos are examples of visual content that use emotional targeting, but so are customized messages sent through private channels. This emotional manipulation is often subtle, with voters being presented with messages that appear urgent and personal, heightening their emotional responses and weakening their ability to critically evaluate facts.

Platform Algorithms and Amplification

AI not only generates content, it also uses platform recommendation systems to accelerate its spread. Social media algorithms often prioritize engagement that involves promoting sensational or provocative content—the exact kind of AI-generated propaganda that garners clicks and shares. By manipulating metadata, hashtags, and timing to capitalize



on trending topics, bots and optimized ads use algorithmic cues to expand their reach beyond their natural audiences. For this reason, manipulative content appears faster, spreads more widely, and persists online longer, making detection and moderation a reactive and often too-late effort.

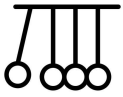
The Impact on Democracy and Global Response

AI-powered propaganda is seriously affecting democratic systems around the world. Studies clearly show that generative AI can influence audiences' thoughts and voting preferences, and deepfakes or fake messages are especially effective before elections when the timing is right. For example, in recent elections, fake audio or video influenced voter decisions before fact-checkers could respond. Even worse, foreign governments, such as Russia and China, are using AI to spread misinformation in other countries with cloned websites, fake news articles, and bots. While some tech companies and governments are working to regulate AI content or improve detection methods, technology is advancing rapidly and malicious actors continue to find ways around these rules. Many experts believe that education and media literacy are key, so they support the idea that people need to be trained to recognize manipulative content and think critically about what they see online. Some schools and community groups have begun teaching these skills, but efforts are still not enough compared to the scale of the problem. Without a larger and more global response, AI could continue to make elections less trustworthy and less fair.

Conclusion

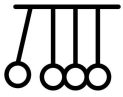
In today's constantly evolving digital world, artificial intelligence does not just change how we live; it also reshapes how democracy works. While AI helps to make political communication faster and smarter, it can also be used to spread lies, confuse voters, and damage the reliability of the election process. As conscious voters and citizens, we must learn to question what we see, be more skeptical, demand stronger rules from platforms and governments, and stay alert to technology's influence on our thoughts and decisions. The future of democracy may depend not just on voting, but on how well we understand and respond to the tools being used to manipulate us.





Sources

1. *Cambridge English Dictionary: Meanings & Definitions*. (2025).
<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/>
2. Muchuma, H. (2025, June 7). AI IN POLITICAL CAMPAIGN STRATEGIES: THE RISE OF MACHINE-MADE ELECTIONS IN UTAHI. *IN UTAHI AI Solutions*.
<https://inuaai.com/ai-in-political-campaign-strategies-the-rise-of-machine-made-elections/>
3. Dehghani, A., & Saberi, H. (2025, January 7). *Generating and Detecting various types of fake image and audio content: A review of modern deep learning technologies and tools*. arXiv.org. <https://arxiv.org/abs/2501.06227>
4. Bhaduri, S., & Bhaduri, S. (2024, September 15). *AI & Political Propaganda | Madras Courier*. Madras Courier.
<https://madrascourier.com/opinion/ai-political-propaganda/>
5. Sofia, R. (2024). UNIFIED VISIONS: COLLABORATIVE PATHS IN MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH, VOLUME-2. In *UNIFIED VISIONS: COLLABORATIVE PATHS IN MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH, VOLUME-2* (p. https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/119514673/978_81_981898_1_3_ebook-libre.pdf?1731406846=&response-content-disposition=inline%3B+filename%3DINTERDISCIPLINARY_RESEARCH_IN_LITERARY_S.pdf&Expires=1740741695&Signature=ZTBgPMLE8vGffcMMQhtveRe7Xnh5tWTF94tmEW7hzPeuYMHXVu6m-hAT~EvkXt~MzzXO4SKU82S3K6KA5jPpnhvktgt~HQU5b9E1Nt2UPNs0GS7tvbZb6KiFlbaKHYm73mfM372YRz9B65e-Bd4cjkQvrqAnPtGG3oE93JoFeEDX8VhjHtxudu1bbvxQ7h05QKg~S7I16NkQMwr0QBYNLaxlTvHpshSiNw4nKdNKy~XwDapWuncK7IKx30zMYYPPr-UyQesSXDDfxqEEKO1Eg8mBU5PCwtH0EUkSSPhXlgV9FuPHC



E3fz-3HLe8LWToIPTaER2viTcEYG4tiI6zn52A__&Key-Pair-Id=APKAJLOHF5GG
SLRBV4ZA#page=151

6. Aziz, F., Alam, M. K., Khan, N., Mehmood, K., Muhammad, J., & Afzal, S. (2024). Political Propaganda on the Internet: A Systematic review. *Migration Letters*, 21–21(S8), 1077–1088. <https://www.migrationletters.com>