IJCRT.ORG ISSN : 2320-2882

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

AI AND POLITICS: A THREAT TO DEMOCRACY OR A TOOL FOR TRANSPARENCY

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Abstract: Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly reshaping political landscapes globally, impacting governance, public administration, and electoral processes. This transformation embodies a complex duality: AI holds the potential to enhance democratic transparency, improve governmental accountability, and foster citizen engagement through efficient data analysis and e-governance platforms. For instance, AI-powered systems can facilitate expedited service delivery, detect electoral fraud, and provide real-time public policy feedback, thereby fortifying the democratic fabric. However, AI also poses significant threats to democracy. The deployment of AI in surveillance, predictive policing, and social credit mechanisms risks undermining privacy and civil liberties. Algorithmic biases embedded in AI systems may reinforce existing inequalities and discrimination, eroding trust in political institutions. Furthermore, AI-driven misinformation campaigns, such as deepfakes and micro-targeted political advertisements, threaten to manipulate public opinion and distort democratic deliberation. This article critically examines both the opportunities and risks of AI in politics, drawing upon global case studies including India's Digital Governance initiatives, the U.S. electoral process, China's surveillance state, and the European Union's regulatory frameworks. It underscores the urgent need for comprehensive legal and ethical guidelines to govern AI use in politics, emphasizing transparency, accountability, and inclusivity. The article concludes that AI's ultimate impact on democracy depends on the regulatory environment, ethical considerations, and active civic oversight. Responsible AI governance can harness technology as a powerful tool for transparency and democratic empowerment, while unchecked AI deployment may pose severe threats to democratic values.

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Keywords- Artificial Intelligence, Politics, Government, Digital, Bias, Transparency, Threat, Privacy, Security, Democracy.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Artificial intelligence (AI) is the ability of machines and computer systems to do tasks that normally require human intelligence. These duties include learning from data, identifying patterns, making decisions. and even simulating human conversation and reasoning. As artificial intelligence evolves, its integration into political systems becomes more common. Governments and political institutions are using AI technologies for a range of objectives, including administrative automation, digital governance, surveillance, election analysis, and policy forecasting.

The increasing involvement of artificial intelligence in politics is more than just a technological advancement; it is a significant transition with far-reaching repercussions for democratic regimes. On the one hand, AI offers the prospect of more transparent governance, efficient public services, and increased civic participation. Artificial intelligence can help policymakers analyse big datasets, predict social trends, and make data-driven decisions that benefit the public. On the other hand, the application of AI in political contexts creates significant ethical, legal, and societal issues. Algorithmic bias, widespread monitoring, voter manipulation through tailored content, and the spread of AI-generated disinformation all jeopardize the legitimacy of democratic processes. The convergence of AI and politics is a vital problem today because it calls into question the basic principles of democratic administration, such as accountability, transparency, and public confidence. The basic argument of this paper is that AI can either be a strong instrument for increasing democratic transparency or a severe threat to democratic principles, depending on how it is built, applied, and governed. This dichotomy necessitates not only responsible supervision of political AI, but also its urgent implementation.

2. POSITIVE ASPECTS OF AI IN POLITICS

Artificial intelligence, when applied ethically and rationally, has the potential to be a powerful tool for improving democratic governance and boosting political transparency. Its applications in public administration, citizen involvement, and governance have already begun to significantly alter the relationship between governments and citizens.

1. E-Governance

One of the most prominent applications of artificial intelligence in politics is e-governance. AI-enabled solutions can automate regular administrative activities, resulting in speedier service delivery and less bureaucratic delays. Governments are increasingly using AI to handle grievances, with intelligent chatbots and virtual assistants interacting with citizens, registering complaints, and routing them to the right agencies. In India, initiatives such as the MyGov platform and AI-powered chatbots in state governance improve citizen-government communication. Furthermore, AI systems contribute to data-

driven decision-making by evaluating massive databases on infrastructure, healthcare, education, and other public services.

2. Transparency and Accountability

AI helps to increase openness and accountability in political and administrative institutions. Real-time data analytics and open-data dashboards enable governments to offer citizens with access to performance metrics, budget allocations, and project progress. By analysing transactional data and financial records, AI technologies can discover patterns of corruption, procurement irregularities, and fund misuse. For example, AI-powered auditing systems have been adopted in several nations to detect abnormalities in public spending.

3. Enhanced Civic Participation

AI improves civic involvement by allowing for two-way communication between citizens and policymakers. Through sentiment analysis, digital polls, and natural language processing tools that examine social media trends and comments, AI-powered platforms are being utilized to collect public opinion. Citizens can ask questions, express concerns, and participate in policy proposal consultations through interactive platforms powered by AI chatbots. This inclusive style of digital democracy improves political responsiveness and empowers marginalized voices.

4. Predictive Analytics and Campaign Strategy

Political campaigns are increasingly using AI to study voter behaviour and preferences (Spirling, 2018). Machine learning algorithms can analyse previous election data, social media activity, and demographic information to discover critical trends and forecast outcomes. As a result, campaigns are better equipped to target their outreach, use resources wisely, and create messaging that appeal to particular audiences. Consequently, AI facilitates more meaningful and individualized interactions between political players and voters, so bolstering the democratic process.

5. Increased Public Participation and Inclusivity

AI has the potential to increase democratic participation by removing language, literacy, and handicap limitations (al M. e., 2016). Government communications can be translated into a variety of languages using natural language processing (NLP) technologies, enabling non-native speakers to access information. AI-powered systems can also help in public consultations by summarizing citizen feedback, identifying common themes, and highlighting points of agreement or disagreement. This facilitates governments' ability to integrate a range of viewpoints into their decision-making procedures.

6. Mitigation of Bias and Promotion of Fairness

While AI systems have the capacity to detect and rectify preexisting biases when properly constructed, they can also occasionally reinforce them. By examining massive datasets, AI can detect patterns of prejudice or unfairness that would otherwise go undetected. Governments can utilize these findings to create more equal policies that treat all citizens fairly. For example, AI can assist in identifying discrepancies in public service access and recommending focused initiatives to correct them.

7. Streamlined Administration and Reduced Bureaucracy

Numerous repetitive administrative jobs, including data entry, document processing, and information retrieval, are being automated by AI. This not only boosts efficiency but also lowers the possibility of human error and corruption (al., 2017). AI improves public administration effectiveness by allowing government staff to focus on more complicated and strategic jobs. For instance, AI-powered systems are able to automatically handle social service applications, identify possible fraud, and guarantee that resources are allocated in an equitable and transparent manner.

8. Data-Driven Decision-Making and Policy Formulation

AI's ability to process and analyse massive amounts of data is transforming how governments make decisions (McAfee, 2017). By combining data from surveys, social media, administrative records, and other sources, AI may identify emerging trends, public concerns, and societal requirements with amazing precision. This data-driven approach allows legislators to create legislation and initiatives that are more closely linked with the population's actual experiences and desires. AI-powered analytics, for example, might assist policymakers in predicting the impact of proposed regulations, allowing them to fine-tune their plans before to implementation and minimize unforeseen repercussions.

9. Enhanced Communication and Citizen Engagement

AI-powered chatbots, virtual assistants, and automated messaging systems are improving individuals' interactions with their governments (Linders, 2012). These applications give users 24/7 access to information, answer frequently asked queries, and help them through complex governmental processes. By lowering communication obstacles, AI promotes a more educated and engaged populace. Furthermore, AI can assist governments in gathering feedback from a broader and more diverse cross-section of the population, ensuring that underrepresented voices are heard and taken into account when making decisions.

10. Efficient and Effective Public Services

AI is changing the way public services are delivered by optimizing resource allocation (Sun & Medaglia, 2019), forecasting demand, and improving response times. For example, in healthcare, AI may analyse patient data to identify those at risk of chronic diseases and prescribe preventive measures. AI has the potential to improve traffic flow and minimize congestion in transportation. These applications not only improve citizens' quality of life, but also increase the overall efficiency of government operations.

11. Depolarization and Deliberative Democracy

AI-powered platforms such as pol.is are pioneering new types of deliberative democracy by allowing citizens to engage in large-scale, structured discussions (Fishkin, 2018). Machine learning is used on these platforms to assess participant input, discover areas of agreement, and highlight varied points of view. AI has the potential to lessen political polarization and build a more collaborative and inclusive democratic culture by facilitating constructive discourse and encouraging mutual understanding.

3. THREATS POSED BY AI TO DEMOCRACY

While artificial intelligence has the potential to improve transparency and administrative efficiency, its unregulated or immoral use in political institutions poses serious challenges to democratic norms. These concerns include a loss of privacy, manipulation of public opinion, a lack of accountability, and algorithmic prejudice that reinforces existing imbalances.

1. Disinformation and Manipulation

Artificial intelligence (AI), especially generative models, can produce synthetic media, deepfakes, and extremely realistic fake news at a never-before-seen scale and speed (Chesney & Citron, 2019). This enables negative players, such as political rivals, interest groups, and foreign adversaries, to flood the information environment with compelling falsehoods, manipulate public opinion, and destroy trust in democratic institutions. Because of the sheer volume and complexity of AI-generated misinformation, citizens are finding it more and more difficult to discern between fake and authentic information, which causes division, misunderstanding, and a breakdown in mutual understanding. To further undermine public trust in the integrity of the political process, deepfakes have already been deployed in certain instances to pose as political figures or create proof of scandal.

2. Surveillance and Privacy Erosion

Artificial intelligence-powered surveillance technologies, such as facial recognition and predictive policing, allow governments and companies to track populations on a large scale. These tactics are employed in authoritarian regimes to stifle dissent, impose conformity, and solidify control. Even in democracies, the extensive use of AI-driven surveillance jeopardizes individual privacy and civil liberties, dampening free speech and political engagement. When people are aware that they are being observed, they are more prone to self-censor and comply to perceived norms, undermining open debate and dissent, both of which are necessary for a functioning democracy (Zuboff, 2019).

3. Algorithmic Opacity and Lack of Accountability

Many AI systems function as "black boxes," which means that humans cannot readily understand or see how they make decisions. This obscurity makes it difficult to hold individuals in charge of AI-driven decisions accountable, particularly when they have an impact on public policy, law enforcement, or social services. AI systems' inability to be explained compromises democratic accountability and can lead to unjust or biased results that disproportionately hurt underprivileged groups (Pasquale, 2015). Citizens lack the ability to question decisions that affect their life since there are no clear processes for oversight and recourse.

4. Concentration of Power

Large tech companies and a few influential nations control the majority of the resources and knowledge needed to create and implement advanced AI. By reducing public monitoring and solidifying current disparities, this concentration of power can give a small elite more influence over political outcomes and information flow (Noble, 2018). These players' dominance in the AI ecosystem runs the risk of excluding

democratic institutions and stifling the opinions of regular people, resulting in a type of digital authoritarianism in which computers, not elected officials, make decisions.

5. Information Chaos and Crisis of Trust

The development of AI-generated material creates a chaotic information environment in which citizens find it more difficult to get accurate information and engage in informed discourse. This information overload and misunderstanding can lead to a confidence crisis, in which people lose faith in the media, political leaders, and democratic institutions. When citizens are unable to tell the difference between truth and deception, democracy's foundations informed consent and collective decision-making are weakened (al, 2018).

6. Disinformation and Deepfakes

AI is an effective instrument for distributing misinformation and deception. Malicious actors use deepfakes, bots, and AI-generated fake news to corrupt public discourse, manipulate political outcomes, and polarize nations. During elections, deliberate misinformation operations can reduce voter turnout, denigrate opposition leaders, and encourage violence. The 2016 US presidential election and other global examples shown how social media algorithms driven by AI can be weaponized to manipulate public opinion.

7. Manipulative Political Advertising

AI enables micro-targeting, in which voters are presented with highly tailored political content based on their online activity and psychological profiles. While this may promote involvement, it also risks manipulating emotions, exploiting anxieties, and disseminating false information. The Cambridge Analytica incident exemplifies how AI-driven data analytics can be used to influence elections without the public's informed permission.

8. Automated Attacks on Democratic Infrastructure

Artificial intelligence can be used to automate attacks on essential democratic infrastructure like voter registration databases, election management systems, and campaign messaging. These attacks have the potential to disrupt democratic processes, weaken public trust in election integrity, and cause turmoil in the information environment. Even if the attacks do not have a direct impact on election results, the sense of vulnerability can be enough to undermine trust in democratic institutions and discourage citizen involvement (Seger, 2020).

9. Loss of Human Accountability

AI-powered public-sector decision-making can obfuscate lines of responsibility. When judgments are made or influenced by opaque algorithms, it is impossible to hold anyone accountable for mistakes, prejudice, or unethical behaviour. This lack of openness undermines democratic supervision while also eroding public trust in political institutions.

10. Legal and Judicial System Overload

AI's ability to automate the development of legal files and appeals has the potential to overwhelm courts and regulatory authorities. This would overburden the legal systems' ability to work efficiently, delaying justice and undermining due process (Niblett, 2017). The consequent inertia may make it much more difficult for citizens to pursue justice and hold powerful actors accountable.

4. CASE STUDIES AND REAL-WORLD EXAMPLES

To understand the dual influence of AI on politics, it is critical to look at how different countries have implemented AI in their political systems. These case studies demonstrate both the benefits that AI provides for increasing transparency and the substantial hazards it poses to democratic norms when exploited or unchecked.

1. India: Digital Governance and Ethical Dilemmas

India has been a leader in the use of digital technologies in government. Initiatives such as Digital India, the Aadhaar biometric identification system, and AI-powered chatbots for citizen services have increased access to government programs, particularly in rural areas. AI is also being used to assess public feedback, track agricultural trends, and forecast infrastructure requirements. However, there have been reports of privacy violations and exclusion errors, particularly in welfare distribution tied to Aadhaar. The absence of a comprehensive data protection law creates ethical concerns about the acceptable application of AI in a democratic setting.

2. Singapore’s GovTech Chatbots

AI-powered chatbots have been used across government organizations, including Ask Jamie (general services), HealthBuddy (healthcare), and the CPF Chatbot (social security) (al. T. e., 2020). Impact on using these tools is it reduced call center workload by 50%. Citizens' inquiries receive 80% faster responses. It is also available in different languages around the clock. It Improved accessibility and efficiency in public service delivery, showing how AI may promote transparency and citizen involvement.

3. Japan’s Earthquake Prediction System

An AI-driven earthquake prediction application uses deep learning to evaluate real-time seismic data. Detection accuracy increased by 70%. Faster evacuations and better emergency planning. Its significance demonstrates AI's ability to enhance public safety and crisis management, building trust in government skills.

4. United States: Electoral Influence and Algorithmic Manipulation

In the United States, artificial intelligence has played a significant role in political campaigns, particularly in targeting voters through social media. The Cambridge Analytica scandal revealed how AI-powered psychological profiling and micro-targeted marketing were used to sway voter behaviour in the 2016 election. AI algorithms also curate the material that people view online, which helps to create "echo

chambers" and political polarization. These advances demonstrate how artificial intelligence might be utilized to covertly impair informed democratic participation.

5. China: AI and Authoritarian Control

China is a prime illustration of how AI may be utilized to maintain authoritarian authority. The government uses AI in a vast monitoring ecosystem that includes facial recognition, behaviour prediction, and a social credit system that scores residents based on their actions. While authorities say that this maintains law and order, it actually restricts freedom of movement, expression, and association. This instance shows how unmanaged AI can be a formidable instrument for political repression and societal control.

6. European Union: Ethical AI and Proactive Regulation

The European Union takes a more balanced approach, favouring AI governance via regulation. The proposed AI Act divides AI applications into risk categories and puts stringent limitations on high-risk usage, such as those in law enforcement and politics. The EU also prioritizes algorithmic transparency, human control, and the preservation of basic rights. This regulatory structure is frequently highlighted as an example for ensuring that AI reinforces rather than undermines democratic norms.

7. AI in Parliaments and Legislative Processes

The Shura Council (Qatar) uses artificial intelligence to generate agenda issues for parliamentary sessions, with explicit administration, documentation, and human monitoring. The system ranks topics using a variety of criteria but does not make decisions on its own, assuring accountability and explainability.

The Inter-legislative Union (IPU) promotes the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in bill writing, modifications, and the production of verbatim reports or subtitles for legislative proceedings. This promotes transparency, efficiency, and the inclusion of varied viewpoints in legislative proceedings (Union, 2021). Its significance is Artificial intelligence is utilized to simplify legislative procedures while upholding ethical norms and public accountability.

8. AI-Enabled Influence Operations in Elections

AI-generated disinformation campaigns by foreign players (e.g., Kremlin- and Beijing-affiliated bot farms) have amplified divisive narratives, disseminated conspiracy theories, and engaged in smear campaigns during the US and UK elections (Howard, 2019). While conclusive evidence of election interference is missing, these operations have harmed trust and exacerbated political divisiveness.

Misattribution of Content: AI-generated or altered media has been used to falsely accuse candidates of endorsements, withdrawals, or phony rally attendance, confusing voters and weakening trust in news sources. It Emphasizes the dual nature of AI in politics, promoting democratic engagement while also permitting sophisticated deception.

9. AI Surveillance and Law Enforcement

China makes extensive use of AI-powered surveillance (facial recognition, drones, and social score) to monitor citizens, stifle opposition, and solidify official power (Roberts, 2019). Similar trends are emerging in other nations, including democracies, increasing fears of authoritarian drift. Whereas, United States cities are increasingly deploying AI surveillance techniques, raising concerns about diminished balances on executive authority and power consolidation. AI surveillance has the potential to harm democratic freedoms by limiting free expression and enabling mass monitoring.

5. LEGAL AND ETHICAL CHALLENGES

As the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in politics grows, it carries with it a slew of legal and ethical quandaries that present governance frameworks are frequently unprepared to handle. While AI has the potential to transform democratic government, a lack of clear norms and ethical standards can result in misuse, inequity, and democratic decay.

1. Absence of Robust Legal Frameworks

Many countries lack explicit legal frameworks for regulating the use of AI in political and administrative institutions. Existing laws frequently fail to address the complexities of AI algorithms, particularly in terms of accountability and liability. For example, when an AI system makes a biased or damaging decision in a government setting, it is sometimes unclear who should be held accountable the developer, the data source, or the governmental entity that deployed the system. This regulatory loophole creates a legal grey area in which rights can be violated without recourse.

2. Consent, Fairness, and Autonomy

Ethical considerations such as informed consent, algorithmic fairness, and autonomy are fundamental to political AI arguments. Citizens are frequently unaware that their data is being used to train AI models or personalize political messaging. Furthermore, the lack of algorithmic transparency makes it difficult to comprehend how decisions are made and whether they are equitable. These difficulties have major implications for democratic legitimacy and citizen agency.

3. Algorithmic Bias and Discrimination

AI systems frequently propagate societal biases. Algorithms can unfairly disfavor individuals based on their political orientation, as evidenced by scholarship allocation algorithms that penalize liberal students. And also, facial recognition systems have higher error rates for darker-skinned people, compounding marginalization.

4. Erosion of Trust and Transparency

In Black-Box Decision-Making many AI systems lack explainability, making it impossible to audit judgments in key areas such as criminal justice or public spending. Initiatives like India's Smart Cities Mission use AI for governance, but frequently lack transparency, fostering public distrust.

5. **Global Disparities and Digital Colonialism**

AI development and control are disproportionately concentrated in powerful states and companies, posing the possibility of digital colonialism. Countries in the Global South frequently rely on imported AI technologies that may not be compatible with their sociopolitical circumstances, thus perpetuating global power inequalities and undermining local democratic processes.

6. **Need for Rights-Based AI Regulation**

There is an increasing global consensus on the need for rights-based AI legislation, which protects privacy, prevents discrimination, and promotes democratic values. Frameworks such as the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the proposed AI Act take steps in this direction by requiring openness, explainability, and human oversight. However, such policies are still lacking or underdeveloped in many regions of the world, making AI governance fragmented and inconsistent.

7. **Privacy and Surveillance Overreach**

Artificial intelligence-powered surveillance technologies, such as facial recognition and vast data collecting, jeopardize fundamental rights to privacy. In India, the Digital Personal Data Protection Act (2023) provides broad exemptions for government entities, allowing for unrestricted data collecting. This goes against the Supreme Court's **Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017)** decision, which established privacy as a fundamental right. Similar issues are raised globally, with the EU's AI Act forbidding real-time biometric identification in public settings unless severely regulated.

8. **Election Integrity and Misinformation**

The role of artificial intelligence in elections creates crucial legal problems. Deepfakes and disinformation generative AI can create convincing fake media that manipulates voter impressions. Current legislation, such as India's IT Act and the EU's AI Act, lack effective procedures for tracing and penalizing malevolent actors. Micro-targeting voters using AI-driven analytics risks violating data protection standards, as witnessed in the Cambridge Analytica affair.

9. **The Role of Independent Institutions**

There is also an urgent need to strengthen the function of independent oversight agencies such as data protection authorities, civil society organizations, and courts. These organizations can act as crucial checks to guarantee that AI used in politics follows to ethical standards and legal conventions.

6. STRIKING THE BALANCE: RESPONSIBLE USE OF AI IN POLITICS

Given the revolutionary capacity of artificial intelligence, the essential issue for democratic societies is to strike a balance between innovation and regulation leveraging AI's benefits while mitigating its risks. This balance is critical to ensuring that AI is used to promote democracy rather than erode it.

1. **Developing Clear Legal and Policy Frameworks**

The first step toward responsible AI use in politics is to establish thorough legal and policy frameworks. These should clearly specify appropriate AI applications in governance, elections, public communication,

and law enforcement. Legal measures must cover algorithmic accountability, data protection, and citizen rights. Importantly, such frameworks must be adaptable and flexible in order to keep up with the rapid evolution of AI technologies.

2. **Ensuring Transparency and Explainability**

Artificial intelligence systems applied in political contexts must be transparent and understandable. Citizens have the right to understand how algorithms make judgments that influence their life, whether in benefit allocation, law enforcement, or public services. Mechanisms such as audit trails, open-source models, and explainability criteria can all help to increase algorithmic openness. These techniques build confidence and enable more public examination of political AI applications.

3. **Accountability**

Clear lines of accountability must be established for the results of AI-driven choices. This implies that both public and private actors that utilize AI in politics should be held accountable for any harm or misuse.

4. **Fairness and Non-Discrimination**

AI systems must be built to minimize bias and provide equal treatment to all persons, regardless of background. Regular audits and diversified training data are crucial to limit the danger of discrimination.

5. **Privacy and Data Protection**

Strict data protection mechanisms must be implemented to preserve voter information and prevent misuse. This involves clear consent to data gathering, strong consequences for breaches, and independent supervision systems.

6. **Promoting Ethical AI Development**

Ethical considerations must influence the development and deployment of AI. This involves ensuring that algorithms are devoid of bias, built with inclusive data, and in line with human rights. Multistakeholder collaboration among governments, civil society, engineers, and ethicists can assist establish practical and principled AI ethical frameworks.

7. **Empowering Citizens and Civil Society**

For AI to effectively serve democratic aims, public empowerment is required. Public awareness campaigns, civic education, and digital literacy projects can assist people understand how artificial intelligence affects their rights and choices. Civil society organizations must also get assistance in their attempts to monitor AI use, highlight abuses, and advocate for appropriate practices.

8. **International Cooperation and Standards**

AI in politics is a global issue that crosses national boundaries. International cooperation is required to develop global norms, best practices, and regulatory requirements. Multilateral organizations like as the United Nations, OECD, and World Economic Forum have started discussions about ethical AI

governance, but more effective coordination is needed to avoid a fragmented or geopolitically biased AI landscape.

7. CONCLUSION

Artificial intelligence is rapidly altering the political scene, providing unprecedented prospects for innovation while also posing serious risks to the fundamental underpinnings of democracy. As discussed in this article, AI can be used to promote transparency by enabling speedier governance, real-time accountability, and increased public participation. AI has the potential to improve democratic systems by enabling data-driven policymaking and greater public engagement.

However, unregulated or misused technology might pose a threat to democratic norms. AI in politics poses actual and growing threats, ranging from surveillance overreach and algorithmic prejudice to voter manipulation and privacy degradation. These risks are exacerbated by legal and ethical flaws, opaque algorithmic procedures, and worldwide inequities in AI access and governance. The issue, therefore, is not to oppose AI's participation in political institutions, but to shape its growth and application through rigorous regulation, ethical oversight, and public empowerment. A balanced, rights-based strategy must be taken, one that promotes transparency, accountability, and fairness while also encouraging innovation and democratic resilience. Ultimately, the choices we make now will determine whether AI becomes a protector of democratic transparency or an instrument of authoritarian control. By prioritizing democratic ideals in AI governance, countries may ensure that this powerful technology serves the public good and supports, rather than diminishes, democracy's pillars.

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