

The Politicization of Artificial Intelligence: Toward a Restructuring of the Relationship Between Authorities and Citizens

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Abstract:

Artificial intelligence is considered the pinnacle of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, as it helps improve operational efficiency, accelerate innovation in fields such as health and education, and enhance the ability to make informed decisions based on accurate data analysis. However, AI technologies are increasingly being used for undisclosed purposes by the companies that own and develop these programs, at the behest of decision-makers themselves. This exploitation relies on a deep understanding of individuals' cognitive biases and the dissemination of pseudoscience to promote narratives that serve the interests of those who benefit. Through carefully designed algorithms, these intelligent tools become capable of steering public opinion and manipulating the course of political life to achieve specific goals. This article aims to explore how governments use artificial intelligence technologies as a political tool to restructure the relationship between the authorities and citizens, and to analyze the challenges facing freedom and democracy in the face of this advanced technology.

Keywords: The Politicization of Artificial Intelligence, "Panopticon," Agnotology.

Introduction:

Artificial intelligence is considered the pinnacle of the Fourth Scientific and Industrial Revolution, as this digital revolution surpasses previous developments in its ability to combine massive amounts of data with intelligent computing. This has enabled the development of applications capable of transforming various aspects of human life to advance progress and well-

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being, It contributes to improving operational efficiency, accelerating innovation in various fields such as health and education, and enhancing the ability to make informed decisions based on accurate data analysis. In this context, the immense importance of this technology for policymakers and governments cannot be denied, as it enables them to interact with their citizens in more efficient and precise ways by enhancing transparency through the integration of this technology into political life in line with concepts such as the “digital citizen” and the “smart citizen,” among others.

Despite the bright side that this technology offers, it also conceals another aspect that is less obvious but more dangerous. Artificial intelligence technologies are increasingly being used for undisclosed purposes by the companies that own and develop these programs, at the behest of decision-makers themselves. These uses, which are often shrouded in ambiguity, have attracted politicians seeking to transform AI into a tool that ostensibly serves the common good and development, but is in reality used to suppress freedoms, shape the democratic public sphere, and influence individual decisions. This exploitation relies on a deep understanding of individuals’ cognitive biases and the dissemination of pseudoscience to reinforce narratives that serve the interests of the beneficiaries. Through carefully designed algorithms, these intelligent tools ultimately become capable of steering public opinion and manipulating the course of political life to achieve specific goals. As these tools continue to evolve, their forms multiply and diversify, raising fundamental questions about their impact on democracy and individual rights.

Therefore, this article seeks to explore this topic from a more realistic perspective, highlighting how politicians and governments use artificial intelligence technologies as a means of control and to consolidate power—rather than from an idealistic perspective that merely promotes the benefits of the technology, glorifies its virtues, or examines its evolution and its “revolt” against humanity. Hence, the central question of this discussion arises: **How are artificial intelligence technologies used by regimes and governments to strengthen control over citizens, undermine their individual freedoms, and reshape democracy to serve their own interests?**

Main Hypothesis:

Artificial intelligence technologies are used by systems and governments as a tool to strengthen control over citizens by exploiting personal data and influencing human behavior and the political public sphere, thereby undermining individual freedoms and reshaping democracy to serve the interests of the ruling powers rather than promoting civic participation.

Methodology:

This research paper is based on the public policy analysis approach, which allows for the study of political decisions, policies, and their objectives and impacts in specific contexts. The paper, in turn, contains several themes that support the use of this approach. These include understanding the relationship between politics and artificial intelligence and linking policies to outcomes and impacts, as well as analysis within specific political contexts, such as data colonization, political disinformation, and the erosion of democracy. The public policy analysis approach provides a methodological framework for understanding these cases and linking them to adopted policies.

Objective:

Exploring how governments use artificial intelligence as a political tool to restructure the relationship between the state and its citizens, and analyzing the challenges facing freedom and democracy in the context of this rapidly evolving technology.

The Relationship Between Artificial Intelligence and Politics (The Politicization of AI):

Despite the acclaim that artificial intelligence receives as the pinnacle of the third wave of civilization; or the culmination of the Fourth Scientific and Industrial Revolution* , through its provision of numerous smart and revolutionary services designed to facilitate and improve various aspects of life—such as generating and verifying images and text, correcting and automating human actions, and predicting human behavior— However, artificial intelligence is not without its own share of accusations, beginning with so-called algorithmic bias, as it does not operate in a vacuum or of its own accord, but is shaped according to the interests and objectives of its developers; it serves the interests of its owners; and, consequently, those who use it and how they use it. This leaves the door open to questions about artificial intelligence, given that it is a tool that influences human interactions and societal structures by affecting democratic processes and the dynamics of power and authority. This very argument corresponds to the concept presented by Harold Lasswell in his definition of politics in his famous statement: “Who gets what, when, and how?” (Lasswell, 1950) . When we look more deeply into the ideology of “AI for what,” “who will use it,” and “AI for whom,” we come to fully understand that AI is political and requires political will and action to make it the transformative technology we need. To put it more clearly, this is what those concerned with the issue mean when they say, “AI is political” (Gürtler, 2024) . When we subject the ideology of AI to scrutiny and, in turn, analyze Lasswell’s formulation—**“Who gets what, when, and how”**—the following becomes clear:

a- “Who gets what”:

By following up on the answer to **“Who builds artificial intelligence?”**, we find that it is those who decide the goals and direction of artificial intelligence (i.e., who reaps the benefits or advantages). Here, it becomes clear that the creators and controllers of AI are the ones who determine who will benefit from the technology and how it will be directed, which raises the concept of algorithmic bias.

b- “When”:

The timing of AI’s use and implementation is influenced by political and social contexts. Making decisions about AI requires political will and an understanding of the historical contexts

* Artificial intelligence represents a concrete manifestation of the ideas put forth by the thinker Alvin Toffler in his book **The Third Wave**, which, in his view, reflects the shift toward an information society, where technology and knowledge play a pivotal role in shaping human life. Conversely, as the scholar Luciano Floridi noted in his book **The Fourth Revolution**, artificial intelligence falls within the framework of the Fourth Scientific Revolution, which is reshaping humanity’s understanding of itself and its role in the world. These two perspectives converge in highlighting the ability of artificial intelligence to reshape social, political, and economic structures, reflecting a new civilizational transition that integrates digital knowledge and technological innovation. For details, see:

- Alvin Toffler, **The Third Wave**, trans. Essam al-Sheikh Qassam, Al-Jamaheeriya Publishing, Distribution, and Advertising House. 1st ed., 1990.
- Luciano Floridi, **The Fourth Revolution**, United Kingdom, Oxford University Press, first edition published, 2014.

in which these programs were developed and the optimal timing for their use—such as during crises, wars, and elections.

c- “How”:

This refers to the ways in which AI is used, which occur through various methods such as data mining, identifying individuals’ cognitive biases, steering human behavior, spreading misinformation, and suppressing freedom, among others. This, of course, involves the use of programs based on algorithms that form the foundation of AI, which relies on **deep learning and machine learning**. It is essential to recognize that the way AI is designed is shaped by political agendas that determine its use and reflect the dynamics of power and control within society.

Accordingly, just as Lasswell views politics as a process of allocating resources and power, the ideology behind the AI industry and its use reflects similar dynamics by determining who holds the authority to control it and how it is used to achieve specific goals. Consequently, artificial intelligence is not neutral; rather, it reflects political decisions in the clearest sense. As a political tool par excellence, it directs human interactions, reshapes social structures, and works to distort democracy. This is done to achieve the goals and political ambitions of the ruling elites (‘2022).

Methods of using artificial intelligence to influence the course of the political process:

Artificial intelligence is used to manipulate political life through subtle and complex methods, far from the public eye or even the relevant authorities, as these operations are carried out in secret, concealing the objectives and impacts of their creators. Nevertheless, a number of methods that rely on AI software as central tools in this political industry can be identified, such as data colonization, the dissemination of pseudoscience, and the manipulation of human behavior—as will be explained in the following points.

1. Digital Data Exploitation and Its Role in Strengthening Political Control

With the proliferation of personal digital accounts and the multitude of social media platforms, the digital (virtual) persona has emerged, and its characteristics and nature have gradually become clear as a reflection of individuals’ true selves. Consequently, artificial intelligence programs have been developed that attempt to classify these personas while predicting their actions with the aim of influencing their behavior. In this regard, big data analytics tools—such as Hadoop and Google BigQuery—have been developed. These tools are used to process vast amounts of social, economic, and political data, enabling governments to understand citizens’ needs and set policy priorities. This was evident in the United States during Barack Obama’s 2012 presidential campaign, where data analytics tools were used to identify potential voters and target them with personalized messages, contributing to the success of the campaign’s “strategy”.

However, the situation was not as ideal as it is portrayed to both the digital and non-digital communities. By analyzing this digital data, large corporations—and, inevitably, governments—can exploit personal information to understand human behavior and then work to influence it. For example, this digital data can be used to marginalize revolutionary movements or suppress dissenting voices. This, in turn, has led these companies and governments to adopt a new concept regarding this stolen digital data, known as “digital colonialism” (Digital Colonialism). This concept was first introduced by Nick Coldrey and Megias in their book **The Costs of Connection**, in which they define it as “a process through which institutions appropriate the data produced by individuals. Accordingly, this concept refers to the privatization of digital

resources, whereby data becomes a tool for political and social control” (Couldry, N., & (2019); . Furthermore, this form of digital colonialism reshapes the relationship between authorities and citizens, as political control comes to be based on the exploitation of data rather than on traditional force.

In this regard, many artificial intelligence tools are used, including behavioral profiling and voter targeting tools such as Crimson Hexagon and Facebook Ad Manager. These tools are used to identify voter profiles based on their digital behavior by collecting data from social media and online platforms, which is nothing less than a clear manifestation of the concept of “digital colonialism” (Digital Colonialism), which allows politicians to use this captured digital data to develop targeted political and social messages. This was evident in the scandal involving the exploitation of Facebook user data to target voters in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, where the involvement of Cambridge Analytica was proven; the company used behavioral models to influence voters’ choices in that election (., & Graham-Harrison, E (2018) .

2. Digital Political Disinformation

Through “digital colonization,” politicians seek to shape people’s behavior, and this can only be achieved after passing through the second stage, in which artificial intelligence is used to disseminate information designed to influence individuals’ attitudes—such as generating misinformation and promoting political agendas by spreading pseudoscience to distort the facts.

3.The Use of Artificial Intelligence to Spread Misinformation

Artificial intelligence has become a key tool in the spread of misinformation, giving politicians a powerful means to shape public opinion and gain political advantage. These operations rely on advanced technologies such as big data analysis algorithms, and the creation of synthetic content using tools like Deepfake and GPT-4, which enable the production of videos, images, and texts that appear authentic but are misleading. A real-world example of this occurred in India, where fake videos created using Deepfake technology were circulated during the 2020 elections to bolster partisan campaign propaganda and mislead voters about the positions of their opponents (Jee, 2020) . Similarly, in Brazil, political bots were used during the 2018 general election to spread fake news and polarize society, which significantly influenced the election results (Dan Arnaudo, 2017) ., These clear examples demonstrate politicians’ ability to exploit artificial intelligence tools to spread misinformation in order to influence political life, particularly elections. However, this political disinformation is not limited to domestic political life; it even extends to international affairs.

We find, for example, that Russia has exploited artificial intelligence tools as part of its strategies for international political influence; In the context of the war in Ukraine, Russia has relied on AI technologies to generate and disseminate disinformation via social media, such as promoting fake stories that distort the image of the Ukrainian leadership or exaggerate supposed internal divisions within Ukrainian society. These efforts included the use of bots to amplify and disseminate disinformation rapidly and on a large scale, which contributed to media instability within Ukraine (., & (2019) ; . . This did not begin with the Russia-Ukraine conflict; numerous reports have pointed to Russia’s involvement in the use of artificial intelligence prior to that period—specifically to influence the 2016 presidential election through companies such as the Internet Research Agency (IRA), which used data analysis and the creation of misleading content to launch intensive campaigns targeting American voters. These campaigns included the creation of targeted political advertisements, such as posts that stoked political divisions and fueled

extremist political and racial sentiments, and extended to the dissemination of fake videos using deepfake technology to generate negative sentiments toward specific candidates (DiResta, R., Shaffer, R., & (2018)).

a. Agnotology and the Spread of Pseudoscience

Agnotology refers to the study of the deliberate production and dissemination of organized ignorance through what is known as the science of ignorance (Agnotology). These pseudosciences are often used to advance political or economic interests, and this ideology has been reinforced by the emergence and widespread use of artificial intelligence in politics, through the dissemination of misleading scientific information. Real-world examples demonstrate how AI technologies are used to mislead the public and thwart opposition forces. In many political systems, captured data is exploited to steer public discourse toward superficial issues, thereby keeping citizens in a state of ignorance (Londa Schiebinger, Robert N. Proctor, 2008) . For example, social media platforms that rely on AI algorithms are used to spread false historical, cultural, and psychological information that weakens revolutionary or opposition movements, as is the case in regimes that maintain their survival by reinforcing social and political divisions. In this regard, politicians have been observed using artificial intelligence to reinforce this ignorance by creating a state of information confusion that makes it difficult for citizens to distinguish between facts and lies. For example, they amplify conspiracy theories or misinformation using seemingly sound scientific methods and approaches, relying on content that is controversial (Trend) or trending on social media, thereby undermining democratic discourse and reinforcing divisions ((2019)).

Many artificial intelligence tools have gained notoriety in this regard, particularly those based on social media platform algorithms. Perhaps the most important and widely used of these intelligent programs for spreading misinformation are what are known as “political bots,” which use bot software such as Botpress and ManyChat to interact with the public via social media platforms, where these bots can disseminate information or respond to citizens’ inquiries. This is what happened in the 2018 Brazilian elections, where political bots were used to spread fake news and exacerbate political polarization among social groups (Dan Arnaudo (2017)).

3. The Impact on Civil Liberties Through the Use of Artificial Intelligence Tools and the Creation of the “Panopticon” Digital Prison

Perhaps the rapid advancement in artificial intelligence (AI) technologies has made it easier for repressive political systems—and others that seek to curtail individual freedoms and shape the political landscape to suit their agendas—to operate. As a result, numerous AI tools have emerged that enable advanced surveillance of individuals by monitoring their behavior in an unprecedented manner. This situation resembles the concept of the “Panopticon” devised by Jeremy Bentham. Individuals feel they are under constant surveillance, which may prompt them to self-regulate their behavior to avoid punishment. This gives rise to the concept of a “transparent society” in the eyes of politicians and governments, as seen in the People’s Republic of China under the “Sharp Eyes” initiative and the “Police Cloud” program. This excessive use of artificial intelligence technologies to monitor individuals, in turn, creates a “digital prison” that curtails personal freedom and negatively impacts individual rights () . In this regard, the philosopher of technological politics , Marc Coeckelbergh, has dedicated a section to discussing the threat that artificial intelligence poses to individual freedom through advanced surveillance tools. He argues that surveillance is invisible yet pervasive, thereby undermining freedom of action even in private spaces ((2022)).

Perhaps this constant surveillance of individuals using artificial intelligence tools has not been limited to surveillance systems such as cameras; the use of social media platforms for this purpose has also been documented. Some view this as reinforcing what is known as “horizontal surveillance,” in which individuals increasingly monitor one another, sometimes leading to threats or blackmail. In contrast, governments and companies engage in what is known as “vertical surveillance,” in which personal data is collected and used for political marketing and political indoctrination, to the extent of political targeting (‘2019) .

5. Steering Human Behavior in Invisible Ways

One of the most dangerous aspects of the politicization of artificial intelligence is the invisible manipulation of human behavior, as AI reshapes the relationship between the government and citizens through tools that influence daily decisions without individuals being aware of it. This occurs by identifying and exploiting individuals’ cognitive biases through AI, which detects and archives these biases—such as the tendency to believe ideas that align with their prior views or to react emotionally to controversial issues. Based on this, targeted messages are designed to amplify these biases to achieve political goals, through various AI mechanisms, including:

a. Recommendation Systems and Personalization of Messages

In this context, artificial intelligence algorithms tailor political content based on individuals’ data. For example, in the 2016 U.S. presidential election—which was previously mentioned in this study—targeted political ads were created to reflect voters’ psychological and social needs. The aim was to indirectly influence their voting decisions (Cadwalladr, C., & Graham-Harrison, E ‘2018). .

b. Sentiment Analysis and Psychological Manipulation

Politicians use artificial intelligence tools such as IBM Watson Natural Language Understanding to analyze public sentiment toward specific issues and to understand public reactions, with the aim of tailoring their political messages to elicit emotional responses from individuals—whether fear, hope, or anger. One such example occurred in India, where political parties used these tools during elections to steer discussions on social media, which led to the exacerbation of sectarian divisions (Bhattacharya ‘2020) .

c. The Impact of Digital Echo Chambers

Artificial intelligence promotes the consumption of content that aligns with users’ existing beliefs, leading to the creation of digital echo chambers. This reinforces divisions and tightens control over the target audience. Politicians exploit this phenomenon to advance their political positions or undermine their opponents, as was the case in the 2018 Brazilian elections, where political bots were used to spread fake news and increase polarization (‘2017) .

There are also numerous documented cases of artificial intelligence being used to advance political agendas, including the Russian-Ukrainian war mentioned earlier in this study, which serves as a striking example of “smart warfare” coming to the fore, In that conflict, AI technologies were used to spread targeted propaganda that fueled fears of Russian interference, thereby influencing citizens’ behavior and political decisions (., & ‘2019) . A similar phenomenon was observed in the British referendum on the United Kingdom’s withdrawal from the European Union (Brexit), where big data analytics tools were used to design influential propaganda campaigns that prompted voters to make informed decisions based on emotional propaganda (Howard, P. N., Ganesh, B., & ‘2019) .

There are many other cases that rely on artificial intelligence tools, which are evolving at a tremendous pace—such as Brandwatch and Hootsuite—that are used to manage digital campaigns and steer public discourse, as was the case during the “Black Lives Matter” protests in the United States, Government agencies used them to identify prevailing trends and disseminate targeted messages to support their viewpoints (Freelon, D., McIlwain, C. D., & ‘2020) .

Conclusion:

This article makes it clear that artificial intelligence, as the pinnacle of the digital revolution, has moved beyond being a technical tool for enhancing services and improving productivity to become a strategic tool used to reshape social, political, and economic relationships. Today, politicians are harnessing artificial intelligence to achieve specific goals, sometimes disregarding ethical values or equality, as this technology is redesigned to reflect the interests of the ruling powers. As Machiavelli noted, “The end justifies the means.” Algorithms are used to shape public narratives and control public opinion in ways that appear neutral and objective on the surface, but in reality conceal hidden agendas that reproduce existing biases and power dynamics. Artificial intelligence does not operate according to intrinsic values or fixed principles; rather, it is shaped by the will of its designers and their shifting interests. Through their control of algorithms, politicians are able to steer election campaigns, reinforce political narratives, and conceal contradictions under the guise of transparency and fairness. However, this strategic use carries profound risks, such as the spread of misinformation, the reinforcement of social polarization, and the exploitation of individuals’ cognitive biases. These intelligent tools, promoted as a means to achieve justice and well-being, are often used to impose control and undermine freedoms. Ultimately, politicians’ use of artificial intelligence reflects an age-old philosophical view that values such as goodness and justice are not absolute, but rather tools used to achieve shifting goals. As Nietzsche said, “There are no facts, only interpretations.” In this context, artificial intelligence becomes a political tool par excellence, constantly reprogrammed to reflect the interests of dominant powers, making it a driving force in shaping the future of politics and societies. Therefore, the greatest challenge remains the establishment of regulatory and ethical frameworks that ensure this technology remains a tool for liberation and progress, not a means of domination and control. Perhaps the most important **findings of this study are as follows:**

Artificial intelligence does not adhere to intrinsic values or principles; rather, it is programmed according to specific software that reflects the will of its creators. In this context, there is no such thing as permanent good or absolute evil; rather, all that exists is algorithmic bias that shifts according to the designers’ priorities and their ever-changing interests, making AI a reflection of power dynamics rather than a neutral tool.

The article makes it clear that the politicization of artificial intelligence is a complex issue that directly affects the relationship between authorities and citizens. Therefore, addressing this issue requires multifaceted cooperation among governments, civil society, and the private sector to ensure a balance between technological innovation and values.

Politicians use artificial intelligence as a Trojan horse, presenting it as a tool for good and for promoting the well-being of society, while in reality they conceal hidden agendas within it that reshape the balance of power in their favor, justifying this with the principle that the ends justify the means.

Accordingly, governments and private AI companies must disclose the design criteria for their algorithms to ensure transparency and minimize bias, and they must empower civil society to monitor the political uses of this technology. International ethical frameworks that respect human values should also be established, and digital literacy should be promoted to empower citizens to make informed decisions. In addition, independent regulatory bodies must be created to oversee the use of artificial intelligence in politics and to foster cooperation among governments, the private sector, and civil society to ensure that the technology is used for the benefit of all.

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