Elections of 2024: How AI Will Change the Game

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Source: The Hill

Introduction

Approaching the 2024 elections, which are going to be held in different parts of the world, including the USA, India, Canada, Germany, etc., with different political structures, a noteworthy evolution is taking place in our electoral landscape through the advent of Artificial Intelligence, commonly known as AI. While we often associate AI with advanced gadgets and futuristic robots, its integration into the political sphere is becoming increasingly prominent. Consider that computers are providing suggestions to people regarding determining the individuals who will guide the nation; this marks a significant development and, in some cases, can be a curse. It is essential to analyze how AI can be poised to redefine people's approach to elections. This should be explored how technology, particularly AI, may play a pivotal role in shaping the future of our political processes, transforming the very essence of the voting experience. This intellectual journey may unveil profound questions surrounding the impact of AI on the democratic tenor and the broader implications it holds for societies globally.

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AI as an Effective Tool for Politicians

Source: Freedom House

As there is no rule about using Artificial Intelligence (AI) in politics, people from competing political parties can start to use technology for different works. This includes doing research that takes a long time, handling office tasks, creating advertisements and so forth.[2]

Swift Responses:

Generative AI enables politicians to quickly react to campaign updates. The RNC (Republican National Committee), for example, swiftly released a video after Biden's reelection announcement without the need for extensive shooting or editing.[3] In this year, response times could reduce to minutes as AI efficiently scans the internet, strategizes, and creates impactful content, offering a cost-effective alternative to expert consultants or videographers.

Precise Targeting:

AI helps politicians to aim their messages at exactly the right people. In elections, candidates do not want to spend money on those who have already made up their minds. They want to focus on a small group of swing voters who can decide the result of the election or discourage people from

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[2] John Lopez, "AI to Take Center Stage in 2024 Election; Experts Warn of the Tech's Effect on Voters", April 30, 2023, https://www.techtimes.com/articles/290964/20230430/ai-take-center-stage-2024-election-experts-warn-techs-effect.htm

[3] Darrell M. West, "How AI will transform the 2024 elections", The Brookings Institution, May 3, 2023, https://www.brookings.edu/articles/how-ai-will-transform-the-2024-elections/

supporting the other candidate. AI uses detailed information about people's activities and beliefs to fine-tune those messages. In real-time, AI helps campaigners reach specific groups with messages that influence their opinions on policies and party preferences.

Disseminating Deceptive Information:

AI is democratizing disinformation by providing advanced tools for the general people. No longer requiring coding or video-making expertise, individuals can easily generate text, images, videos, or programs to spread their desired messages about the candidates whom they may or may not support by using AI. This turns anyone into a political content creator aiming to influence voters or the media. In the intense atmosphere of high-stakes elections, voters may find incentives to share false information, potentially swaying the race. Particularly in USA, with the 2024 presidential election potentially hinging on a few states and tens of thousands of voters, even subtle influences could prove decisive.[4] New technologies also allow people to profit from discontent by leveraging fears, anxieties, or anger, with generative AI crafting messages for various issues.

AI's Potentials to Have Impacts on 2024's Elections Worldwide

- A recent news story says that the Republican National Committee (RNC) used a computer-made video to criticize Joe Biden.[5] This shows how likely it is for Artificial Intelligence (AI) to affect the upcoming election of the USA. It is not just small changes to photos anymore or putting someone's head on another person's body. Now, we are moving into a time where we create and share a lot of digital stuff.

- In 2016, groups in Russia linked to the government used lots of people and over a million dollars every month to spread information and influence the U.S. election.[6] So, in 2024, with the help of generative AI, they could do a similar thing but with way fewer people and spending less money. In the future, efforts like these might not need as many middlemen; instead, they can use advanced automated systems.

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[4] Darrell M. West, "How AI will transform the 2024 elections".

[5] ibid

[6] Abigail Abrams, "Here's What We Know So Far About Russia's 2016 Meddling", April 18, 2019, https://time.com/5565991/russia-influence-2016-election/

- In 2018, the president of Gabon went abroad for a few months to get medical help. While he was away, people at home got confused and some started making up stories.[7] The Gabon government released a video to prove the president was okay and alive but some people said it was fake. Even if the video was real, the chance to make fake videos made people doubt it, causing a lot of confusion. So, again in 2024 with easier and cheaper templates, there might be a lot of different claims during campaigns and it might be hard to tell what is true or fake. We might not be sure how these messages will impact the election. It is like entering a time of uncertainty in how we share information during elections.

Possibilities of Challenges being Posed by AI During Elections

Source: Medium

Building Trust and Fighting Chaos: Misinformation and disinformation are big problems during elections, as per the Global Risks Perception Survey.[8] AI makes it easy to spread fake information and create fake content, like voice cloning or fake websites. This can make people doubt and question if the government is legit. Some think AI can help fight these issues, but others worry it might make things worse. There are also concerns about robocalls and text messages spreading false info to change how people vote, and officials facing threats like phishing and doxing. Trust

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[7] Noah Giansiracusa, "How AI Puts Elections at Risk — And the Needed Safeguards", June 13, 2023, https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/how-ai-puts-elections-risk-and-needed-safeguards
[8] Noah Giansiracusa, "How AI Puts Elections at Risk — And the Needed Safeguards".

is a big problem too, with people feeling left behind by technology and society, making them doubt the fairness of systems like capitalism. The use of AI in elections is like a big experiment, and there is a need to make sure it helps rather than causes chaos.

Privacy and Safety Concerns: Using AI might put personal information at risk. If not handled properly, sensitive data could be misused or end up in the wrong hands, creating suffering for both general people and political personalities. Those using AI need to be careful about following rules to protect people's data.

Risk of Partiality: AI systems might show unfairness because they learn from biased data. If the information they use is already unfair, the AI can make things worse. This can affect how elections turn out. In at least 16 countries in the past, AI tools were used to spread distorted information about political or social issues, according to a report by Freedom House.[9] They also found examples of this happening in U.S. political campaigns.

Positive Prospects

The integration of AI into elections can surely have some positive outcomes. However, effective implementation depends on well-defined rules and regulations.

Source: Summit Human Capital

- AI has the potential to address issues like stereotyping voter blocs by enabling hyper-localized and hyper-personalized campaigns.

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[9] Sparky Zivin & Seán Earley, "Vision 2024: In Depth – GPT Out the Vote: The Good, the Bad and the Unknown for AI in the 2024", February 13, 2024, https://www.teneo.com/insights/articles/vision-2024-in-depth-gpt-out-the-vote-the-good-the-bad-and-the-unknown-for-ai-in-the-2024-elections/

- It can enhance information accessibility by employing AI chatbots, offering a direct line to campaigns and presenting information in diverse languages.
- Some government agencies are already using AI for basic tasks and there is a possibility of its expansion into more complex functions, such as fraud detection.

Despite the potential benefits, caution is advised in integrating AI into elections immediately as it might lead to unforeseen challenges.

Some Noteworthy Case Studies

India: In India, a famous political figure, M Karunanidhi, who passed away, has been brought back using AI for public events. In a recent instance, a video of him congratulating a friend was created using AI. This is the third time AI has been used to bring him back for such events in the past six months. The AI-made videos aim to boost the popularity of his son MK Stalin, the current leader of Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) party of Tamil Nadu.[10] The company creating these videos sees a market for such AI applications, especially in politics. However, this use of AI has raised ethical concerns, as it involves bringing back a deceased person and attributing opinions to them. Despite the concerns, the demand for AI in political campaigns is growing in India.

Indonesia: Before the Indonesian presidential campaign, Prabowo Subianto, a former military general accused of taking wrong steps against those people who wanted democracy, is using AI to make a cartoon version of himself.[11] He wants to look friendly and attract young voters.

Canada: Experts at Canada's cyber intelligence agency, the Communications Security Establishment (CSE), are worried about the impact of AI on elections.[12] They released a report warning that AI could be used to trick voters and they are ready to deal with it. They can take down misleading content online and use defensive cyber operations if needed. Canada's use of paper ballots also helps protect elections from online interference. The CSE, along with other agencies,

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[10] Nilesh Christopher, "How AI is resurrecting dead Indian politicians as election looms", Al Jazeera, February 12, 2024, https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2024/2/12/how-ai-is-used-to-resurrect-dead-indian-politicians-as-elections-loom

[11] Nilesh Christopher, "How AI is resurrecting dead Indian politicians as election looms".

[12] Catharine Tunney, "AI-powered disinformation is spreading — is Canada ready for the political impact?", CBC News, January 18, 2024, https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/ai-deepfake-election-canada-1.7084398

will share information about any attempts to manipulate voters with the government during the next election.

Russia: In Russia, AI is used in a unique way in politics. While the Kremlin does not rely on AI-driven campaigns for elections, it uses deepfakes against President Putin's political opponents.[13] The Russian government creates various and ever-changing stories to undermine trust. During the Ukraine invasion, a deepfake video of Ukrainian President Zelensky was uploaded, seemingly urging surrender, causing confusion. Recent incidents reveal that deep fakes are used to harm political opponents. Writers with anti-war views were targeted with fake videos, leading to a decline in book sales. Even an actor had a video conference with a convincing deep fake of a Ukrainian official showing how these fakes can look very real.[14]

Slovakia: Before Slovakia's national election of 2023, a fake voice recording spread lies about a political leader discussing buying votes. The recording was proven to be a "deepfake" hoax. On election day, Michal Simecka, leader of the Progressive Slovakia party, lost to a pro-Kremlin candidate. While it's hard to say if the fake recording changed the election, it highlights concerns about how AI products are affecting democracy worldwide.[15]

In addition to these cases, if we particularly consider the scenario of South Asia, AI is being used a lot in political campaigns but sometimes it is not used in the right way. For example, in this year's election of Bangladesh, people supporting the government have used something called deepfakes to create fake videos and target parties that do not agree with them.[16] And in Pakistan, the former Prime Minister Imran Khan was running for elections even while being in jail. He used to write notes to his lawyers and they used a special AI software from a company in the U.S. to turn those notes into speeches that people can listen to.[17]

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[13] Alla Polishchuk, "AI Poses Risks to Both Authoritarian and Democratic Politics", Wilson Center, January 26, 2024, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/ai-poses-risks-both-authoritarian-and-democratic-politics
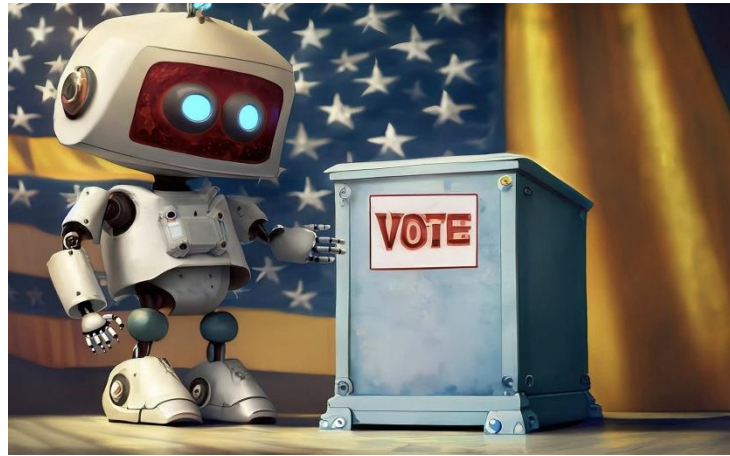[14] Alla Polishchuk, "AI Poses Risks to Both Authoritarian and Democratic Politics".
[15] Catharine Tunney, "AI-powered disinformation is spreading — is Canada ready for the political impact?".
[16] Nilesh Christopher, "How AI is resurrecting dead Indian politicians as election looms".
[17] ibid

Conclusion

Source: Milwaukee Independent

So, the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into political campaigns presents both opportunities and challenges. While AI enables swift responses, precise targeting, and effective use of information, it also poses risks such as disseminating deceptive information, privacy concerns and potential bias. Case studies from around the world, including India, Indonesia, Canada, Russia, and Slovakia, highlight the varied applications and ethical considerations of AI in politics. As the 2024 elections approach, addressing these challenges and ensuring ethical use is crucial for the responsible deployment of AI in shaping the future of political processes.