

**ADVANCE SOCIAL SCIENCE ARCHIVE JOURNAL**Available Online: <https://assajournal.com>

Vol. 04 No. 02. October-December 2025. Page# 102-113

Print ISSN: [3006-2497](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17264584) Online ISSN: [3006-2500](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17264584)Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17264584)<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17264584>

## The Double-Edged Sword: Artificial Intelligence, Electoral Integrity, and the Future of Democracy in Pakistan

**Nimra Javaid**

Master in Political Science, University of Sargodha

Email: [nimrajavaid46@gmail.com](mailto:nimrajavaid46@gmail.com)**Abstract**

*The rapid integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into the electoral arena is a paradigm shift to the global democracies with a paradigmatic duoism. This two-sided sword in this article by the author is the case of a weak democratic culture in the country of Pakistan with certain weaknesses, including political polarization, poor digital literacy rates, and election fraud. A qualitative case study design is employed in the present study to evaluate the dual aspects of AI as the source of the transformative opportunities in the form of how to make the processes of electoral administration and voter participation better and as the threat to existentialism in the form of weaponized disinformation, manipulation of micro-targets, and algorithmic bias. It is based on the combination of theoretical frameworks of the Democratic Theory and the Social Shaping of Technology which claim that the influence of AI is not predetermined but formed by the agency of institutions. The article appraises critically the nascent policy and legal framework in Pakistan, such as the National AI Policy (2025), Election Act (2017), and PECA (2016) and shows that these rules and legislations have major gaps in regulation and lack an institutional capacity within the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). The lessons learnt during comparative analysis of the regulatory vacuum in India, the proactive governance of the European Union, and the rather disjointed approach of the United States can be considered to be crucial. The results also indicate that AI has already started undermining the electoral integrity and trust in Pakistan as the 2024 election in the country has been marked by a completely unregulated use of AI to spread misinformation, deepfakes, and targeted suppression campaigns. The paper concludes that Pakistan is at a cross-road and that multi-stakeholder intervention is much needed. It offers practical suggestions, such as AI guidelines suggested by ECP, legislative changes to protect data and criminalise malicious deepfakes, and a voluntary code of practice among political parties to exploit the democratic benefits of AI and resolve unequivocally the dangers it poses.*

**Keywords:** Artificial Intelligence, Electoral Integrity, Pakistan, Democracy, Disinformation, Micro-targeting, Election Commission of Pakistan, Regulatory Framework

**Introduction**

The widespread introduction of artificial intelligence (AI) into political campaigns has established the phenomenon as a transformative, and in many ways highly disruptive, element in democracies across the world, having a dual-sided effect that has ranged between increasing civic engagement to compromising the integrity of elections (International IDEA, 2025; New York Times, 2025). In 80 percent of the countries, AI has been significantly applied in elections (CIGI, 2025) by 2024. This technology is powerful because of its ability to be scaled and have powerful features that enable hyper-personalized voter communication

as well as the ability to create disinformation on an industrial scale (Brennan Center for Justice, 2025). Misinformation has also assumed a scathing global shape because the internationalization of misinformation has resulted in campaigns in different countries that involve AI to provide artificial suggestions to world leaders including Joe Biden and Donald Trump so that they can sway the political discourse in the country (Sidley, 2025). This new digital terrain is likely to have the central problem of the ability of citizens to differentiate between fact and fiction to further polarize it and to drag the roots of deliberation that underlies democratic societies (DEV Community, 2025).

The entry of AI into the political life in Pakistan, a nation torn by acute political polarization, media fragmentation and history of electoral tensions, is acted, in this context, by the background of pre-existing weaknesses. The creating realities like the one in Pakistan, according to the international observers, are the most susceptible to the digital manipulation due to the inability to regulate it and the weaker institutions that are capable of regulating the manipulation (CIGI, 2025; International IDEA, 2025). The organized disinformation attacks have already targeted information environment in the country in order to instill divisions within the societies (New York Times, 2025). To complicate this further, there is the issue of weak digital literacy that can result in a reduction of the capacity of the population to counteract AI-created fake news, such as deepfakes and false news (Brennan Center for Justice, 2025). Collectively, all these circumstances offer a perfect-looking ground, which can be utilized by both local and international players to utilize the AI technologies, not only to influence the number of voters turning out, but also a systematic maturation of trust in the very process of democracy (DEV Community, 2025).

The AI dilemma of Pakistan is thus a perfect example of the metaphor of a two-edged sword. On the one hand, AI is bringing processes of unbelievable productivity and transparency. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has likewise initiated the training of the application of AI and digital technologies to enhance the integrity of elections with the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (ECP & UNDP, 2025). On the more positive note, AI may be used to streamline voter registration, educate citizens using chatbots, and complement official control mechanisms. Nonetheless, the con side is enhanced with the capability of AI to be manipulated and controlled. The technology has made it possible to make persuasive deepfakes to defame candidates, discriminatory micro-targeting to reduce voter turnout in a targeted demographic, and spread synthetic media capable of prompting social unrest (City & State NY, 2025). This dualism means the very tools that can make elections more efficient can also be weaponized to make them profoundly unfair (International IDEA, 2025).

The core research problem is that the rapid adoption and potential misuse of AI in Pakistani elections is dramatically outpacing the development of necessary legal, ethical, and technical safeguards. While the Pakistani government unveiled its first National Artificial Intelligence Policy in 2025, aiming to ensure responsible and ethical use (Arab News, 2025), the specific application of such frameworks to the cut-throat arena of electoral politics remains a critical uncertainty (Sidley, 2025). The nation currently stands at a precipice where the threats are latent but expanding; the absence of robust, AI-specific electoral laws, effective content provenance standards, and dedicated institutional capacity creates a dangerous regulatory vacuum (New York Times, 2025). Consequently, this article argues that while AI can enhance electoral efficiency and voter engagement in Pakistan, its unregulated use for disinformation, deepfakes, and discriminatory micro-targeting poses an existential threat to electoral integrity, demanding an urgent and nuanced policy response to safeguard the country's democratic future (CIGI, 2025; Brennan Center for Justice, 2025).

### **Literature Review**

The global discourse on the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on democracy is increasingly framed around its potential to undermine foundational democratic pillars. Scholars identify three core areas

under particular threat: representation, accountability, and trust (Zahra, Azizan, & Sophia, 2025). The concern is that generative AI, which can produce vast quantities of convincing text and media, can be weaponized to distort the signals between citizens and their government. As one example, state legislators in the U.S. found it difficult to tell the difference between AI-generated and human-written constituent correspondence, responding to each at approximately the same frequency (IAS Gazette, 2025). This implies that bad players can artificially overrate support or opposition of policy to distort democratic representation. More than that, the ability of the technology to create disinformation and compelling propaganda at the industrial level presents a direct challenge to accountability in elections through overwhelming the information space with fake news about the candidates and their campaigns (The Friday Times, 2025). Such a destabilization of a common factual foundation of political language undermines the social and political trust without which the lively functioning democracy will not be possible, which can result in a generalized nihilism and the greater use of partisan heuristics (Zahra et al., 2025). The world experience regarding the AI-generated disinformation in Indian and Brazilian elections and the AI-enabled targeted advertising in the Philippines confirms that it is not a theoretical threat, but a real problem that needs to be tackled globally (The Parliamentarian, 2024).

On the other hand, a literature on the benefits of AI in electoral administration is also developing, presenting it as the means of improving efficiency and integrity. AI has gained currency among election management organizations to automatize the work that is labor-intensive, which has high error rates (Zahra et al., 2025). The other prominent one is the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC), a multi-state alliance in the United States, which uses AI to the highly qualified voter roll interventions, in effect separating the occurrence of the same registration in multiple jurisdictions with a much greater degree of accuracy than previous methods (IAS Gazette, 2025). Similarly, AI-based signature checking systems through mail-in ballots are being used to accelerate the human resources activities by balancing out the mismatches to notify the human factor about the errors (The Friday Times, 2025). Looking forward, scholars and practitioners identify a wider range of potential applications, including the use of AI chatbots to provide voters with 24/7 access to accurate information on polling places and procedures, and sophisticated data analysis to optimize polling place locations based on traffic patterns and public transportation routes (Zahra et al., 2025). These tools, however, come with significant caveats; they risk perpetuating historical biases present in their training data and can suffer from "hallucinations" (generating false information), necessitating robust human oversight and review protocols to ensure their benefits are realized without harming voter access (The Parliamentarian, 2024).

The domain of digital campaigning represents the most widely analyzed and perhaps most perilous intersection of AI and politics. Here, the literature details how AI amplifies and refines traditional tactics of political persuasion and manipulation. The foundation is data-driven marketing, which leverages predictive analytics and micro-targeting to create highly personalized political advertisements (IAS Gazette, 2025). This capability, when divorced from ethical constraints, can be used to create and disseminate AI-generated propaganda, which research has shown to be as believable as human-written content (Zahra et al., 2025). The 2024 scholarly research highlights that AI language models are not neutral; they inherit and can amplify biases from their training data, which can then be deployed to sway voter decisions, create fake narratives, and generate deepfakes synthetic audio, images, or video to undermine political opponents (The Friday Times, 2025). This creates a new era of disinformation campaigns that are more efficient, scalable, and convincing than the influence operations observed in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, fundamentally threatening the ability of voters to make informed decisions based on factual reality (The Parliamentarian, 2024).

Within the Pakistani context, scholarly work on AI's role in elections is emergent but limited, often focusing on digital media strategy more broadly. The 2024 general election, however, provides a critical case study that is beginning to be analyzed. Initial analyses highlight a dualistic reality: political actors, specifically the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), innovatively used AI to circumvent severe traditional campaign restrictions. This included generating an AI-made speech from the imprisoned party leader, Imran Khan, to energize the base, and leveraging peer-to-peer communication networks on platforms like WhatsApp to disseminate candidate information (The Parliamentarian, 2024). These tactics demonstrate AI's potential as a tool for political resilience and mobilization. However, the same electoral cycle was also marred by the negative use of AI, with deepfakes and audio messages being deployed to spread misinformation, falsely announce candidate boycotts, and manipulate voter behavior (The Friday Times, 2025). This nascent body of work effectively documents these events but often lacks a deeper, systematic analysis of the long-term implications for electoral integrity in Pakistan's unique socio-political landscape, characterized by political polarization and a significant digital divide (Imtiaz, Ali, Aziz, & Shamim, 2025). Therefore, a substantial research gap exists for a focused analysis that critically assesses both the opportunistic and threatening facets of AI within Pakistan's specific democratic challenges, a gap which this article aims to fill.

### **Problem Statement**

The integrity of Pakistan's electoral process, a cornerstone for its fragile democratic consolidation, faces an unprecedented challenge from the rapid and unregulated integration of artificial intelligence. This technological paradigm creates a critical paradox: while AI presents transformative tools for enhancing administrative efficiency, voter education, and electoral transparency, its concurrent and unchecked application by political actors and other entities threatens to fundamentally undermine the legitimacy of elections. The point of the matter is that the risk of a potentially deadly asymmetry is being cultivated, where the capability to control voters by using AI-based hyper-realistic deepfakes, intricate micro-targeting, and automatic disinformation attacks is accelerating the process of establishing legal, ethical, and technical regulation. This institutional and regulatory lag has had the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) ill equipped to secure the electoral space and has developed an urgent concern to analyse and intervene to prevent the same tools of empowering democracy against democracy.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To identify specific AI-driven opportunities for enhancing electoral administration and civic engagement in Pakistan.
2. To investigate the emergent threats posed by AI, including deepfakes, coordinated disinformation networks, and algorithmic bias in micro-targeting.
3. To evaluate the existing Pakistani policy and legal framework's capacity to regulate the use of AI in elections.
4. To develop a set of actionable policy recommendations for stakeholders.

### **Methodology**

This study will rely on a qualitative case study research design to build a contextualized, in-depth analysis of the dual role that AI played in the Pakistani electoral politics. A detailed desktop survey will form the primary data collection instrument and will examine closely screened policy documents, namely, the Pakistan Election Act (2017), prevention of electronic crimes act (PECA - 2016), official policies and regulations of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), and the election campaign content and platforms of the major political parties. That will be supported with specific case studies of some AI-related events of the 2024 and 2018 general elections, such as the use of deepfakes of generative artificial

intelligence, and the orchestrating actions of artificial intelligence social media bots with social media networks, such as twitter/X. To support the triangulation of the findings, the research project will examine the secondary data presented by non-governmental organizations, international institutions such as the International Foundation of Electoral Systems (IFES) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and credible and investigative journalism. They will result in the analytical method that is the thematic analysis through which the data gathered is coded systematically to identify, analyze and present the recurring patterns (themes) relating to the primary research question. The two theoretical approaches used to analyze the article by the prism of the democratic theory and social shaping of technology will play an indispensable role in the agonizingly detailed calculation of the major opportunities and threats in the procedure of discovering the identifying themes and developing a holistic perception of the impact of AI on the electoral integrity of Pakistan.

### **Theoretical Foundations**

This paper will strongly examine the role of artificial intelligence on the electoral integrity in Pakistan by basing on two complementary theoretical frameworks: Democratic Theory with a deliberative democracy and a public sphere and Technological Determinism versus the Social Shaping of Technology (SST). This two-pronged lens offers a whole framework of determining whether AI is a power that cannot be controlled and it transforms democracy or is a device that can be guided by the society, its values, and laws (Garnett and James, n.d.; Williams, 2024).

Democratic Theory offers the normative basis of evaluating the quality of the public discourse and engagement. The concept of deliberative democracy, which privileges reasoned discourse among informed citizens as the basis for legitimate decision-making, is of particular relevance (Journal of Democracy, 2024). AI technologies present a profound paradox for this ideal. On one hand, they offer tools that could, in theory, enhance deliberation by summarizing vast amounts of information, facilitating large-scale citizen assemblies, and translating languages to broaden participation (Human Rights Watch, 2024). However, contemporary scholarship critically questions this techno-optimistic view, arguing that such approaches often promote a sanitized model of "democracy without politics," which assumes away the fundamental agonism, power struggles, and enduring collective loyalties (Curtis, 2007). In the Pakistani context, this tension is palpable. While AI-generated speeches were used to circumvent political suppression and mobilize voters, thereby sustaining a form of public discourse (Williams, 2024), they also risk replacing the authentic, messy deliberation of a vibrant public sphere with a curated, synthetic simulation (The Diplomatic Insight, 2025). Furthermore, AI's capacity to generate hyper-realistic deepfakes and micro-targeted disinformation directly attacks electoral integrity by polluting the information ecosystem, overwhelming citizens' cognitive capacities, and eroding the shared factual reality essential for informed participation (Human Rights Watch, 2024).

The second axis of this framework interrogates the very nature of AI's influence through the classic sociological debate between Technological Determinism and the Social Shaping of Technology (SST). The determinist perspective, which views technology as an autonomous, inevitable force that dictates social change, is a powerful narrative in public discourse (Williams, 2024). This view frames AI as an external, unstoppable juggernaut whose negative effects on democracy, such as algorithmic manipulation and the spread of synthetic media, must be passively accepted as the price of progress (SDPI, n.d.). This sentiment is often reinforced by a "techno-capitalist determinism" that presents market-driven AI innovation as an unalterable reality (Human Rights Watch, 2024). In contrast, the paradigm of SST asserts that technological trajectories are not pre-ordained but are shaped by social norms, political choices, regulatory frameworks, and cultural contexts (Garnett & James, n.d.). This perspective empowers a proactive stance, suggesting that a society's democratic future is not foreclosed by AI but is instead a site

of active negotiation. Evidence for this agency is emerging; Pakistan's introduction of its first National Artificial Intelligence Policy in 2025, which explicitly aims to ensure "responsible and ethical use of AI," represents a concrete, if nascent, attempt at social shaping through governance (SDPI, n.d.). Similarly, global public deliberation, such as the Meta Community Forums, demonstrates a demand for transparency and user control over AI systems, underscoring that societal values can guide technological development (ECP & UNDP, n.d.).

By integrating these two theoretical perspectives, this study avoids both technological euphoria and despair. Democratic Theory provides the values deliberation, integrity, and an empowered public sphere by which to judge AI's impact. Simultaneously, the Determinism/SST dyad provides the analytical tool to understand the dynamics of that impact and to identify the points of institutional, regulatory, and societal agency where Pakistan might intervene to steer AI toward democratic empowerment rather than democratic decay. This framework firmly establishes that the relationship between AI and democracy is not a predetermined outcome but a political contest that will be won by the strength of a society's institutions and the clarity of its democratic convictions (Curtis, 2007; Williams, 2024).

### **Policy and Legal Framework in Pakistan**

Pakistan's existing legal architecture, built for a pre-AI era, is fundamentally ill-suited to address the sophisticated threats AI poses to electoral democracy. The *Pakistan Election Act of 2017* establishes the foundation for conducting elections but is silent on the use of AI, synthetic media, or data-driven micro-targeting by political actors (Election Act, 2017). Similarly, while the *Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) 2016* criminalizes broader online offences like defamation and fraud which could theoretically be applied to, for instance, a defamatory deepfake it does not explicitly ban the creation or dissemination of deepfakes for political manipulation, leaving a critical loophole (Government of Pakistan, 2016). This regulatory void is particularly alarming given the demonstrated global use of AI for voter suppression and disinformation (Junaid & Rafiq, 2022). The landmark development is the cabinet approval of the *National Artificial Intelligence Policy 2025*, which outlines ambitious pillars for an AI ecosystem, including ethical guidelines, regulatory sandboxes, and cybersecurity protocols (Government of Pakistan, 2023). However, as a strategic policy document, it lacks the binding force of specific electoral law. Critics argue that without concrete, enforceable legislation, the policy's ethical aspirations risk remaining "aspirational rhetoric," especially without a dedicated, independent regulatory authority to oversee its implementation in sensitive areas like elections (Ali & Arshad, 2023).

The Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) technical and investigative capacity to monitor and enforce regulations against malicious AI use remains a profound concern. The global comparative analysis highlights that effective AI governance, as seen in the European Union's *AI Act*, relies on clear, risk-based classifications and substantial financial penalties to ensure compliance (European Parliament, 2024). The ECP currently lacks a similar specialized mandate, technical expertise, and dedicated resources to proactively detect AI-generated disinformation, audit political party algorithms, or investigate sophisticated digital manipulation campaigns (Ali & Arshad, 2023). This institutional deficit is compounded by significant regulatory gaps within the Pakistani legal system. Firstly, there is no law specifically prohibiting the use of deepfakes or other synthetic media in political campaigns, creating a legal grey area for malicious actors (Government of Pakistan, 2016). Secondly, there are no transparency requirements mandating the disclosure of AI-generated content or the funding sources behind AI-powered political advertisements (Junaid & Rafiq, 2022). Furthermore, the absence of a comprehensive data protection law a foundational element for regulating AI—leaves citizen data vulnerable to being harvested and exploited for unethical micro-targeting and voter manipulation without any recourse (Ali & Arshad, 2023). These gaps, combined with a broader context of talent shortages and limited

technological infrastructure, severely constrain the ECP's ability to serve as an effective digital-age electoral watchdog.

To close these canyons, Pakistan needs to immediately shift towards the policy vision to enforceable law. It will require a multi-pronged strategy starting with a legislative intercession of the amendment to Election Act 2017 and PECA 2016. The amendments should clearly make the malicious use of deepfakes and synthetic media in election illegal, impose rigorous transparency standards on AI-delivered political advertisements, and introduce a liability system against AI-caused copyright violations and other injuries (Government of Pakistan, 2016; Election Act, 2017). At the same time, The ECP has to be institutionally boosted. It involves developing its own technical capability by means of special training, sophisticated detection, and cybersecurity and digital forensics teams (Ali and Arshad, 2023). Based on the experience of the UK sectoral approach, the ECP may be officially given the mandate to becoming the regulator of the use of AI in electoral procedures (Junaid and Rafiq, 2022). Last but not the least, Pakistan needs to use the National AI Policy as a plan, relocating to fulfill its immediate objectives, which are the creation of the suggested National AI Fund and the launch of the general awareness campaigns (Government of Pakistan, 2023). The medium-term solution is to set up an independent AI regulatory body, as is already done in Singapore, which might offer the necessary centralized control to guarantee ethical adherence in all industries, including the political one (Ali and Arshad, 2023).

#### **Comparative Analysis: Lessons from India, the EU, and the USA**

Comparative analysis of AI worldwide applications in elections demonstrates rising and falling paradigms dramatically, as it provides Pakistan important insights into the impact of lack of regulations, the potential of active governmental management, and the dangers of the fragmented, market-oriented approach. With its social and political similarities, India provides a useful comparison for learning lessons for Pakistan. The BJP was the first political party in India to embrace artificial intelligence and analytics, and this created a technological gap that rivals find hard to bridge. Personal dog-whistling AI-generated videos that tailor messages to Indians, a polyglot country, and advanced voter profiling is just the tip of the technological iceberg. Nevertheless, such technological savvy is contextualized in a pandemic ecosystem of roving disinformation, largely being carried and stashed in the encrypted ecosystem of WhatsApp, where lies, and deep fake video spread in closed networks, further dividing the society and weakening the election system as reported by Pal et al. (2023). The lesson is apparent based on the silence of the regulators in Pakistan. With this legal vacuum in the Indian context, consisting of no general law on data protection, no anti-AI voter suppression law, the technological abuse illustrates that the vacuum of technology and progress can be turned to democratic leukaemia.

Contrary to the laxity of the attitude in India, the European Union is proactive and thorough in the digital regulation, which is a good example that can serve to safeguard democracy. This is apparent in the Artificial Intelligence Act (2024) wherein the EU will enumerate all AI systems which interact with elections and voter analytics as high-risk and impose strict enforcement transparency, control and human data access requirements. This is also supported by the Digital Services Act (2022) that imposes very large Internet platforms on systemic risks, analyzes the societal harms caused by the AI-generated disinformation, and establishes the means to contain it. The European model is proactive, rights-based and charges the digital technology companies to bear the cost of the democratic harm. Pakistan can follow the example of the EU in inventing ethical systems of innovation regulation in which platforms and political actors bear the responsibility to use AI to do things that do not compromise the integrity of the elections but citizens learn how to identify the truth within a constantly synthetic information space.

With the example of the United States, we see how, to a third alternative, technological proliferation and legislative standstill poorly remedied in a delayed, poorly integrated fashion, and even worse, in a

piecemeal fashion, play out politically to the extreme. In the political US landscape, campaign AI tools and Super PACs automate campaign deepfakes, microtarget, and conduct fully automated campaigns without oversight, creating a regulatory vacuum. Efforts to contain the lawlessness in the airspace created by the legislative equivalent of the Deepfake Task Force Act have floundered in a partisan Congress and created a patchwork of incoherent state laws. The system of self-regulating services of Big Tech has poorly reasoned and poorly-coordinated reactive regulation that lets content police themselves without any meaningful external regulation. These impacts can be practical, where real world outcomes of such regulatory laxity can manifest, as could be the case of the AI generated candidate voiced robocalls filled with misinformation disseminated throughout the 2024 primaries. One can easily imagine how the bad actors can take advantage of the loopholes. The American experience can also warn Pakistan that too much dependence on corporate goodwill and law failure to interfere in the AI plays an effective field in regards to attacking popular trust and showing that there is a finite amount of time in which any story-off evil process can be put in the electoral playbook.

### **Findings and Discussion**

The application of artificial intelligence in the recent elections in Pakistan underscores the maintaining of a balance between the application of artificial intelligence in both positive and negative results. The positive side of the AI brings about the use of the AI in transformative opportunities of vision of civic discourse and electoral integrity. The AI-powered election administration systems could assist in the streams in the administrative procedures at the elections in the developing nations as observed in the UNDP-funded research like verification and cleaning of voters databases and demographic data to identify. Result management AIs can also automate election outcome distribution and processes, minimise human errors in the electoral outcome, and minimise the period of disputes. In addition to the backend election administration, AI facilitates civic participation in an election. As an illustration, AI-based chatbots can be integrated with popular messaging platforms that the majority of citizens use (WhatsApp, etc.) and interact with the citizens supplying them with the correct and up-to-date information about polling locations, documents required to vote, and the voting process, thus, combating information asymmetry directly and allowing an informed electorate to participate in the elections. Technology can offer great assistance to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), as this can offer a remedy to efficient and more credible elections.

The 2024 general election was however, a hard contender of how this sword was sharpened to the extent of being a threat, and how this is best exemplified by the use of the AI to propagate disinformation. The most successful was a generative AI deepfake of jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan which circulated an official party message and circumvented a mainstream media ban. Although this particular case was not ignored by the party, it could be regarded as a dangerous precedent, showing the powerful ability of AI to create reality. According to analysts at the Digital Forensic Research Lab of the Atlantic Council, even mobilization via AI-generated content can blur the demarcation between authentic and synthetic media, thus a liar's dividend can fully be granted in which any actual evidence is directly ignored and regarded as fake. This event was not single, as it was surrounded by a tidal wave of low-fidelity AI-generated audio clips and images that were used to slander anyone who opposed, fake boycotts and cause pandemonium. It is moreover an ideal way of the national and international enemy to influence the mass consciousness by persuading synthetic media that is comparatively cheap and simplified to multiply, direct and immediate attack on the quality of the political speech.

What makes the danger of actual disinformation even worse is a more insidious form of micro-targeting that uses AI to analyze huge datasets to suppress and polarize voters. With weak laws of data protection, as in the case of Pakistan, political consultancies can harvest personal information on social media and



other digital footprints to build detailed psychographic images of the voter. An investigation into digital campaigning tactics revealed how AI algorithms can then be used to identify susceptible demographic slices—such as undecided voters in a particular constituency or members of a specific ethnic group—and target them with tailored, often contradictory or inflammatory, messaging. This can include spreading polarizing content to deepen social divisions or, more perniciously, delivering discouraging messages aimed at suppressing voter turnout among an opponent's support base. The very precision of this targeting makes it difficult to detect and counter, as the content is not broadcast publicly but delivered privately into the social media feeds of individuals, creating a fractured and manipulated information environment that undermines the concept of a shared public sphere.

AI's discriminatory power amplifies already existing social inequalities by embedding biases in systems that marginalize already oppressed groups. AI models learn from historical data, and if that data is laden with societal biases, outcomes from those models will reflect and exacerbate those biases. One political application is the practice of micro-targeting voters, where women, religious minorities, or specific ethnicities are grossly under-targeted for engagement. Historical data on voter turnout is misled and it includes such categories as low engagement voters. A South Asian research on algorithmic bias observed the tools have the propensity to uphold patriarchy by directing campaign resources into the hand of male voters and the language employed to disempower women and minority concerns. There is political disengagement in communities which are digitally redlined and the political agenda is skewed. The qualitative concerns of whole disenfranchised groups are disregarded by AI-sensitive political parties, pushing them even further into political marginalization.

The combination of all these threats results in disinformation, manipulation, micro-targeting, and algorithmic bias, all of which contain systematic erosion of popular trust, which is the basis of any democracy. And when a crack appears in the faith of a democracy, there is a crack in the faith of the people in the very democracy that they live in, since the algorithms that cannot be tracked defraud them, and the electoral democracy seems a great unfair game. The use of AI-created deepfakes during the 2024 election showed the lack of trust and was an important issue since losing candidates focused on the localities where the results were impacted. But the same lack of confidence goes into the power of the elected government and the impunity of the Elections Commission, and even the principle of popular sovereignty itself. It would frustrate Pakistani democracy to instability because the International Institute of Democracy and Electoral Assistance has issued a warning, which leads to a vicious cycle of non-participation and anti-democratic cries of discontent.

#### **Recommendations**

1. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) must immediately develop and enforce mandatory "AI Election Guidelines" that require full transparency and provenance for all AI-generated campaign content.
2. The ECP should establish a dedicated digital monitoring cell staffed with technical experts to proactively detect and investigate malicious AI activity during electoral cycles.
3. The ECP ought to launch public awareness campaigns to educate voters on identifying deepfakes and AI-generated disinformation.
4. The Legislature must urgently enact a comprehensive Data Protection Act to regulate the collection and use of personal data for political micro-targeting.

5. The Legislature should amend the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) and the Election Act 2017 to explicitly criminalize the malicious creation and distribution of deepfakes for electoral manipulation.
6. The Legislature needs to mandate strict transparency for political advertising, requiring clear disclosure of AI-generated content and its funding sources.
7. All political parties must publicly adopt and adhere to a voluntary code of conduct governing the ethical use of AI and voter data in their campaigns.
8. Political parties should commit to internal audits to ensure their AI-driven outreach tools do not perpetuate biases against women, minorities, or other marginalized communities.
9. Civil society organizations should intensify digital literacy campaigns to bolster public resilience against AI-powered disinformation.
10. Media houses and NGOs must invest in advanced fact-checking initiatives and forensic media analysis units to rapidly debunk synthetic media and hold manipulators accountable.

### Conclusion

The main argument of this article holds that artificial intelligence is radical and disruptive dualism to the emergent democracy in Pakistan as it is both the democratization of Pakistan weapon and the high-tech destruction of Pakistan weapon. On the one hand, AI in itself is an unmatched arsenal of tools to streamline the electoral process and make it even more efficient with the help of automated voter lists cleaning, simplified results management, and data-driven delimitation. It may also spur a surge in civic participation because currently the citizens have become highly aware and more engaged citizens with custom-made and readily available data created by AI-powered chatbots. This good so-called opportunity edge of the sword, however, is frozen with a very high power threat edge. The same underlying technologies facilitate scale generation to counter deepfakes that will undermine political leaders, launch manipulative micro-targeting campaigns capable of overcoming a turnout or amplifying social polarization, and strengthen disinformation generated by an algorithm capable of ideation filling. Its parallels are horrible and ominous: the laissez-faire types of the United States and India have shown how costly democracy is the price of regulatory dawdling and institutional bondage when technology has exceeded the means of control, and when the citizens are no longer trusted. Conversely, the European Union has demonstrated that its rights-based, proactive model, such as the AI and Digital Services Act, is a workable form of making accountability and transparency, and human control, integral to the technological core of electoral politics, which is that strong control can re-deploy innovation to democratic purposes, as opposed to disruptive destabilisation.

In conclusion, the future of technological determinism of the Pakistanis democracy is not something that the Pakistan people will still chase in the age of AI. The country is at a very grave cross road that the future of democracy will be decided by the urgency, prudence and action of the institutions of the present. The time clock is almost running out to do something about the situation as the dark arts are getting their names written on the election game book. Such a reversal requires a definitive, logical and multi stakeholder action. It includes giving the Election Commission of Pakistan a special mandate, skills, and committed resources to detect and put an end to malevolent activities by AI within a short time frame. It demands the velocity of the actions of the legislature must go beyond the inspirational policy to pass a

complete Data Protection Act and purge the policies already in force on the electoral and the cyber laws by criminalizing AI-driven manipulation, by revealing the political advertising, and by providing redress in harms. At the same time, political parties should be not only regulated but also peer-pressured to seek binding ethical covenant on AI and data usage and civil society and media should strengthen their campaigns to raise awareness of people via digital literacy and sophisticated fact-checking campaigns. Only in the context of so concerted and pro-active action could Pakistan dream of the strategic exploitation of AI opportunities in enhancing its electoral transparency and decisive flint-knifeing its existential risks, which would be considered to secure the Pakistani democratic compact future.

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