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The Algorithmic Leviathan: Artificial Intelligence, the Reshaping of Political Power, and the Existential Threat to Human Agency

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Abstract

Artificial intelligence (AI) has evolved from a technological innovation into a strategic instrument of political power that is central to governance and international influence. In the contemporary world, AI systems mediate the production, distribution, and perception of information, thereby reshaping relations between citizens, governments, and states. This paper examines the complex role of AI in global politics—ranging from election manipulation and propaganda to cyber warfare, digital surveillance, and transnational crime—showing how AI-driven technologies now permeate nearly all spheres of human interaction and operate at the intersection of political communication, control, and persuasion through algorithmic and data-driven processes. Combining theoretical analysis with empirical case evidence, the study employs frameworks such as technopolitics, algorithmic governance, and political communication theory to conceptualize AI simultaneously as a politically active actor and as a technological tool of power. Drawing on case studies, it analyzes how states and political entities deploy AI to gain strategic advantage: in Russia, AI has been

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associated with disinformation operations, fabricated media content, and coordinated social media manipulation aimed at influencing foreign elections and undermining democratic institutions; in the United States, AI-driven data analytics and sentiment modeling have transformed electoral campaigning by enabling hyper-personalized voter targeting, while raising profound concerns about privacy and political manipulation; and in Bangladesh, reports of the Awami League's use of AI-assisted bot networks and synthetic digital content illustrate the growing role of AI in shaping domestic political discourse. Collectively, these dynamics demonstrate that AI now functions as a core vector of political power in an interconnected world, intensifying long-standing debates over sovereignty, legitimacy, and democratic accountability.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence; Global Politics; Algorithmic Governance; Political Communication; Disinformation.

INTRODUCTION

Politics is no longer just a parliament or a ballot box or a television debate in the twenty-first century. Now it echoes across every corner of digital life – social media feeds, cybersecurity systems, surveillance networks, online markets, and even algorithms that determine what citizens see, hear, and believe. AI has become the basis of what political ideas are created, communicated, and controlled in the context of artificial intelligence. To control public opinion, to guide elections, and to build state power, what was once a tool of industrial automation has become a global tool for shaping public opinion. In this shifting landscape, politics can be heard everywhere, because AI has redefined the boundaries between political activity, economic pursuit and technology. Its function is data, decision-making and influence. AI tries to articulate the relationships of data, decision-making, and influence. As the creator of social and political surveillance and data collection, it has been able to collect, analyze and predict human behavior allowing governments, political leaders and private corporations unprecedented control over social and political processes. In order to target voters directly from AI-driven voter targeting systems to disinformation campaigns, artificial intelligence has pushed the boundaries of political engagement. Since election is based in human persuasion and ideology, it is now based in algorithmic prediction and psychological profiling. The technopolitics whose convergence of technology and politics, like technopolitics, has turned information into a weapon and data into a new form of political capital.

The political impact of AI can be understood by three interrelated phenomena: information manipulation, surveillance, and militarization. These areas show that AI impacts domestic and international politics. In information manipulation fields, AI algorithms are employed for creating duds in videos, for fake news articles, for automated propaganda via social media. This has been used to disrupt elections, split societies and undermine democratic institutions. For example, the Russian Federation has been accused repeatedly of orchestrating disinformation campaigns targeting Western democracies. In the 2016-2020 U.S. presidential election, automated social media bots and artificial content attempts to expand different political discourses and increase voter distrust in both polls and in AI-generated content. But, AI is used in political campaigns and governments to analyze large numbers of voter behavior, social sentiment and demographic characteristics for the U.S. AI-based microtargeting allows campaigns to identify and tailor personalized messages to specific voters in order to maximize persuasion efficiency, saving time of outreach and saving time spent on outreach. The same technology that allows democratic participation to undermine it is also incompatible with it exposing privacy, manipulation, and bringing the gap between political elites and the populace further.

South Asia has similar dynamics, but they all are different. For instance, news from DismisLab and Dhaka Tribune, in Bangladesh, has documented the use of artificially trained bot networks and synthetic virtual people-types as means of funding the Awami League during election periods. Millions of fake accounts and AI-generated "supporter" videos have been circulating online that promoted pro-government propaganda and silenced dissident voices. Such practices illustrate how AI can be deployed as a domestic political weapon strengthening the ruling party, assuring voters, and creating a illusion of popular consensus. This trend, also, suggests a growing regional trend: as developing countries digitize governance, they increasingly use AI not only for efficiency and development, but also politically control and image management. AI's influence extends beyond election politics to cybercrime, espionage and military operations. Modern cyber warfare is increasingly relying on machine learning to spot vulnerabilities, predict adversary behavior, and automate attacks. Governments use artificial intelligence to check for surveillance, intercept communications and even manipulate foreign information systems. So, AI is defensive and offensive in this regard. In the ongoing race to create autonomous weapons, predictive defense algorithms, and drone intelligence systems, there has been new ethical and geopolitical debate about the militarization of AI. By studying AI arms race, such nations like the United States, Russia,

and China are now engaged in what scholars call the AI arms race where technological superiority equates to strategic power. Another dimension in which AI and politics merge is the political economy of technology, use of AI as part of business, finance and global crime networks. Political corruption, illicit financing, and transnational money laundering increasingly rely on digital algorithms for hiding and automating. It is criminal organizations using AI tools to disrupt security protocols, generate synthetic identities and manipulate cryptographic funds. Such technologies are political.

For example, cybercrime and illegal weapon trade funds can be used to lobby, fund propaganda, or even interfere in foreign elections directly. This relationship between AI, economics and politics is a new frontier of algorithmic corruption, where political power can be purchased and protected through digital processes rather than by traditional patronage networks. Specifically, these phenomena can be understood as algorithmic governance, which explains how automation and predictive analysis are now making or altering political decisions that were never subject to human judgement. Algorithms decide how popular political advertisements reach these citizens and where news stories are searched for in search results, and how opinions are suppressed or amplified online. AI is not a neutral tool but a political force embedded in governance. It plays a vital role in people's understanding of truth, trust, and legitimacy – the foundations of democracy. The logical paradox in emphasizing AI in political systems is that it allows greater efficiency and participation but also increases manipulation and control, in which AI can both enhance efficiency and participation. On the one hand, AI allows governments to collect public feedback, to deliver more services faster and to uncover corruption. On the other hand it allows states and corporations to monitor populations, collect personal information, and allow engineers to consent. This contradiction represents the political ambivalence of technology where the mechanisms that democratize access can bolster authoritarian attitudes can also further amplify their own ideologies.

These needs have started to be recognized by the global powers. The European Union's AI Act, the U.S. National AI Strategy and the Bangladesh National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence (2020) all try to regulate and harness AI ethically. But, these mechanisms are fragmented and often lack any insight into political implications of AI manipulation. Insufficient global standards, AI perpetuates political inequality – granting powerful powers to technologically advanced nations and hindering poor countries from digital interference and misinformation. Also, AI technologies have a transnational nature

and political influence cannot be constrained by geography. In seconds, the country that elects a political actor abroad may reach millions of citizens elsewhere. In a borderless political world, algorithms have commodified a way of cross-border politics where they act as diplomats, propagandists and spy. Thus, sovereignty itself is reconfigured: Nations have to now protect not just their physical borders but also information and algorithmic boundaries. By that definition this paper claims that AI has become both the medium of and message of modern politics. It mediates communication, dictates perception, even determines what public discourse actually is. Today politics is outside of technology, and technology is outside of politics. From social media storytelling to drone warfare to data analysis to electioneering, AI amplify every sound, symbol, and strategy of political life.

As a result, the argument stems from the main thesis that AI is not just helping politics; it is redefining it. In a world in which algorithms guiding our beliefs and data guiding our decisions is no longer rhetoric or ideology, but it is computational control and control that is political influence. What this means is that AI has become the echo chamber of global power, transmitting political messages across all spheres – economics, military, criminal, and social. These intersections will be explained in the follow-up areas of this paper. Section Two outlines the theoretical and conceptual frameworks for AI's political function. Section Three examines AI as part of global disinformation campaigns, and Section Four discusses social media manipulation and psychological warfare. Section Five discusses AI's integration into cyber espionage and election interference. Section Six focuses on AI militarization and Section Seven has an analysis of it's link to crime and corruption. Section Eight looks at governance and ethical problems, and Section Nine looks at the future of AI driven politics and power dynamics. The last section concludes with a synthesis of findings and recommendations for ethical, transparent, and accountable use of AI in global politics.

This paper ultimately points to AI as an inspiration and reflection of global political change. Its ability to gather data, predict behavior and influence decisions means that everyone's life from personal privacy through international security is now politically charged. In this respect, politics is so sound in speeches and rallies that it not only resonates in codes, networks, or algorithms. Political action truly can be heard everywhere.

Table 1: *Summary of AI's global political influence.*

Dimension	Description	Examples / Illustrations	Political Implications
Nature of AI in Politics	AI shifts from a tool to a driver of global political behavior and decision-making.	Predictive analytics, campaign automation.	Alters power structures and control mechanisms.
Positive Impacts	Improves efficiency and responsiveness in governance.	Smart governance, voter analytics.	Enhances transparency and policy accuracy.
Negative Impacts	Enables manipulation and disinformation.	Deepfakes, bot networks.	Undermines democracy and public trust.
Ethical Issues	Raises privacy, accountability, and bias concerns.	Facial recognition, predictive policing.	Challenges human rights and ethics.
Global Power Dynamics	Central to modern geopolitical competition.	U.S., Russia, China AI use.	Shifts power toward tech-dominant nations.
Future Outlook	Redefines global governance and politics.	AI ethics, global cooperation.	Promotes responsible and inclusive innovation.

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical and conceptual base needed for understanding the political implications of AI across the world needs a strong understanding of AI. AI is not a neutral computational tool, but it is part of a complex social, political and economic environment that define power, control, and governance. This section establishes the theoretical basis upon which all of the rest of the paper is built. It draws on important texts of technopolitics, algorithmic governance, political communication theory and cybernetic warfare to explain how AI has become an active agent in shaping global politics.

Table 2: *Key theories on algorithmic power.*

Theory / Framework	Key Idea	Application to AI and Politics	Implication for Human Agency
Foucault's Power/Knowledge	Power is exercised through the control of knowledge.	AI systems determine what information is visible or suppressed.	Citizens' understanding and decisions become shaped by algorithmic visibility.

Theory / Framework	Key Idea	Application to AI and Politics	Implication for Human Agency
Posthumanism	Challenges human centrality in knowledge production.	AI emerges as a non-human actor influencing politics.	Redefines human autonomy and authority in decision-making.
Technological Determinism	Technology drives social and political change.	AI dictates patterns of governance and economic control.	Limits human freedom as politics follows algorithmic logic.
Political Economy of Information	Data is a form of capital and control.	Governments and corporations use data to consolidate power.	Public behavior becomes commodified and predictable.
Actor–Network Theory (ANT)	Power emerges through human and non-human networks.	AI functions within a web of data, users, and institutions.	Agency is distributed, not solely human-centered.

Technopolitics and the Fusion of Power and Technology

Technopolitics is an analytical term for the strategic use of technology to shape, shape and reproduce power relations in society. The idea, as opposed to ideological tools of design, popular with scholars such as Andrew Feenberg and Gabrielle Hecht, is that technologies do not represent political machines; they represent the intentions, values and interests of those who develop them and deploy them. It is technopolitics that explains how algorithms, data systems, and automation have become instruments of political influence and control in AI. As modern political actors, democratic states, authoritarian governments, or private corporations, increasingly use AI systems to help control public opinion, evaluate decisions and take the reins in both domestic and international affairs. For instance, governments use AI to monitor digital surveillance, predictive polices and voter analytics; political campaigns use AI to design targeted messages; and corporations use data-driven marketing to shape consumer-political identity. In all of these cases, the technological process itself becomes political, shaping who is accessing information, whose voices are amplified and whose perspectives are silenced. The technopolitical theory therefore redefines power as technological capability. This is not just an economic advantage but also the most dominant information and psychological position of nations with advanced AI capabilities. AI is now deployed within governance and defense systems, and therefore power is measured as the ability to collect, analyze, and respond to massive amounts of data faster than opponents. As a result AI no longer fits the role of politics, it is itself its operating system.

Algorithmic Governance: From Decision Support to Decision Power

They have been close links to technopolitics, but algorithmic governance is connected to technopolitics. This is a result of the growing tendency of governments, corporations, and institutions to place decisions over automatic systems and predictor models. The algorithms now take care of welfare allocation, monitoring of elections, and even judicial sentencing in some states. Instead, algorithmic governance, in turn, changes the old definitions of accountability, transparency, and legitimacy.

In political situations, algorithmic governance occurs through the automating of decision-making in elections, public administration and international security. AI-enabled analytics can learn for example which voters receive specific political ads and determine the place in which citizens make decisions influencing the information environment in which citizens made decisions. Similar to how AI surveillance tools determine who a person or group will receive the attention of law enforcement, biases in the data will sometimes remain. The risks are inherent in the low-density of these systems, their decisions seldom being subject to proprietary algorithms and technology, and citizens being very difficult to challenge or even understand politics itself. Algorithmic governance also blurs the distinction between state and corporate power. Social media platforms like Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and TikTok become algorithms in political arenas, where automated systems decide which political content becomes visible and which is not. These algorithms for engagement rather than truth give added traction to divisive or sensational content influencing election, public debate, and policy-making. In this sense, the governance of society increasingly depends not on elected officials, but on machine logic.

Political Communication Theory and AI-Mediated Influence

Traditional political communication theory approaches the way messages are composed, sent, and received in political contexts. It focuses on media effects, agenda-setting, framing, and persuasion. Yet AI has democratized the dynamics of communication in terms of computational propaganda, used in order to manipulate public discourse at a larger scale. In the earlier decades, political communication was predominantly unidirectional; leaders spoke to the public via speeches, television and print. AI-driven communications today are interactive, personalized, and continuous. Machine learning models assess behavioral patterns of participants to predict and predict the behavior of

future actions. In this, there is microtargeted political advertising where AI tries to put messages in a context to resonate with the values, fears, or dreams of each voter.

By comparison, in recent U.S. elections, AI models were used to collect millions of data points on social media to predict votes and send them out on time. On the other hand, in Russia and Bangladesh, AI-powered bot networks feed social media with repetitive stories, creating artificial consensus, and silence opposition voices. This is psychologically and structurally psychological, as some of citizens view some viewpoints as popular and legitimate because they are algorithmically enhanced. This manipulation of perception is a new frontier in political communication one where persuasion is automated and invisible embedded in digital systems. Deepfakes also characterize AI's role in political communications as deep-fake, or hyperrealistic synthetic videos or audios that deflect political figures or events. Deepfakes reshape the trust in visual evidence, and have already been weaponised for propaganda purposes. It is also likely to undermine the credibility of legitimate media and institutions in the wake of more sophisticated AI models.

Cybernetic Warfare and Digital Espionage

In addition, cybernetic warfare relates to integration of AI and machine learning into cyber operations and cyber conflict strategies. Through this framework information is both a weapon and a battlefield. AI systems are deployed to identify vulnerabilities, predict adversaries' behavior, and use precise attack tactics on information infrastructure. Several countries such as Russia, China, and the United States are very active in providing AI-powered cyber capabilities. These are automated hacking systems, predictive threat analysis, and AI-enhanced encryption and decryption technologies. Like traditional warfare, cybernetic warfare takes place in the shadows, whose partisan confrontations are often nimbly invisible, and their political consequences have profound political implications. In less than five minutes, it is possible to shut down elections, cripple economies and turn national security into a failure under AI powered cyber. Cybernetic warfare expands psychologically too. AI can measure social sentiment and trigger information campaigns that aim to manipulate public morale or disrupt political systems. This combination of cyber and psychological operations, called cognitive warfare, is a new kind of conflict, where victory is determined via influence rather than territory. AI thus becomes a geopolitical asset that regulates power in the digital age.

Dataism and the Political Economy of AI

Further in our study, the theory of dataism that Yuval Noah Harari used to refer to is more recently a conceptual approach to the subject. Dataism takes the universe, and society, as a set of data flows and claims that the ultimate value for actions, people or ideas is in processing and to play a part in data processing. Throughout the political spectrum, dataism allows states and corporations to composable and profitable datasets of human behavior. AI grew on data, so control over data translates into power. Political actors collect and process citizen's personal information for security or administrative purposes, psychological profiling, propaganda targeting and behavioral prediction, not just because citizens are political. It has produced a data-political complex, of surveillance capitalism and digital authoritarianism. For example, in China, the government's social credit system uses AI surveillance and data analysis to control citizen behavior, reward conformity and punish discontent. In Western democracies such as Western democracies private corporations use behavioral data to influence elections and consumer behavior. Dataism thus re-defines democracy as a data driven enterprise. Political representation becomes algorithmic, not based on human judgement but on patterns in digital behavior. This shifting of powers and powers, coupled with predictive governance and behavioral control, disrupts the foundation of liberal democracy, replacing individual autonomy and informed consent.

Ethical and Security Implications of Theoretical Models

Each of these theoretical views is, in particular, the utility of AI in politics and its ethical paradoxes. Technopolitics raises questions about technological sovereignty: what are the monopolies of and rights over tools that help political life? The automated governance also hinders democracy's transparency as citizens increasingly live under systems they don't understand and accept. The political communication theory warns against the erosion of truth through deepfakes and computational propaganda. While cybernetic warfare poses the risk of invisible war, dataism exposes the purification of human identity. One conclusion is that AI is the politicization of technology and the technologization of politics. Power, once exercised through institutions and ideologies, is now being exercised through data, code and computation. The ethical consequences of mass surveillance and false advertising, as well as loss of privacy, autonomy, and democratic integrity are vast.

AI IN POLITICAL INFLUENCE AND DISINFORMATION CAMPAIGNS

AI has radically transformed the landscape of politics and influence, automating persuasion, enacting propaganda, bending boundaries between truth and falsehood. There is no longer a traditional campaigning phase; there is now a digital ecosystem that will use algorithms to track, identify and manipulate human behavior in a global context. This section explores how AI drives politics through disinformation, computational propaganda and psychological manipulation, and how governments, corporations and non-state actors use these tools to control narrative and influence the outcomes of elections.

From Political Messaging to Algorithmic Persuasion

The 20th century had a demand for political news via television, print, and rallies. In the 21st century, AI has replaced these with algorithmic persuasion – an algorithm applied to information and machine learning that personalizes political messages in order to match what people believe, why and what they think. AI can be used to microtarget messages and deliver their own messages across millions of people at the same time. This data-driven approach was also widely used in the Cambridge Analytica scandal, where personal data collected from Facebook users was used to predict and influence voter behavior in the 2016 U.S. presidential election and the Brexit referendum. These AI models can capture personality traits, browsing habits and emotional triggers as well as the characteristics of personality, and use them to draw personalized messages that encouraged people to change their behavior in order to achieve desired political goals without knowing it. Such AI-driven personalization is not critical reasoning but evokes emotion and create echo chambers that reinforce ideological biases. These are not to mention the psychology of AI as a means of communication, but as a psychological agent, an automated persuader that anticipates human response, and exploits cognitive vulnerabilities for political purposes.

Table 3: *AI-driven tactics in Russian political influence.*

Category	AI Application	Example / Case Study	Impact on Political Environment
Disinformation Campaigns	AI-generated deepfakes and fake news	2016 & 2020 U.S. Elections	Misled voters and intensified polarization
Social Media Manipulation	Automated bots, fake profiles, and AI comment systems	IRA (Internet Research Agency) Operations	Amplified divisive narratives and reduced trust

Category	AI Application	Example / Case Study	Impact on Political Environment
Cyber Espionage	AI-based intrusion detection avoidance and data mining	Hacks on political parties and institutions	Exposed confidential data, disrupting trust in governance
Narrative Engineering	Natural Language Processing (NLP) to shape political discourse	Targeted content creation on social media	Shifted public perception toward pro-Russian sentiments
Information Warfare Coordination	AI coordination tools for synchronized propaganda	Telegram and VK networks	Increased efficiency of multi-platform misinformation

Computational Propaganda and the Rise of Political Bots

One of the most powerful AI-driven techniques of modern politics is computational propaganda, with algorithms, bots, and networked automation used to manipulate public discourse. Political bots are artificial social media accounts that are programmed to like, share, comment and write political content in a massive scale. They do not do human behavior but they give them illusions of public support or outrage. The authoritarian and democratic governments in the world use computational propaganda. In Russia, artificial-intelligence-based bot networks have played a central role in disinformation campaigns that threaten foreign elections, spread conspiracy theories, and distort society. For example, the Internet Research Agency (IRA) in St. Petersburg employed thousands of bots and troll accounts in an attempt to spread political ideology among American and European countries. These operations use AI to identify trending topics, create emotional response and post time for maximum engagement.

To compare it to Bangladesh, reports have linked the ruling Awami League to AI-enabled networks that promote government narratives and condemn opposition voice. When a friend sends a message on X (to Twitter from the former Twitter) that she supports the government, they send it through automated messages, accusing the government's supporters of "anti-national." The digital revolution makes it difficult to produce consensus in the digital world where authentic voices are virtually impossible to compete against a scale that can easily be scaled up. Political bots are not only damaging public opinion, they also undermine trust in democratic communications. When citizens can't distinguish authentic speech from automated propaganda, their political system loses credibility. This crisis of

authenticity was called post-truth condition in which emotions and virality overpower facts and verification.

Deepfakes and Synthetic Media in Political Warfare

But it is in disinformation that the deepfake is the newest danger of AI in disinformation, synthetic audio or video created in the wake of deep learning algorithms which can imitate what somebody said or did, and which would realistically imagine people speaking or doing things they never did. Deepfake exploits human communication with the evidence that renders it virtually impossible to find the truth from fabrication. Deepfakes have been weaponized in a variety of political contexts. In 2019, a shocking video of Nancy Pelosi, then U.S. Speaker of the House, was widely distributed suggested to appear drunk and incoherent, by making her appear intoxicated and unconcerned. In spite of the viral release, the video also showed the power of artificial intelligence in manipulating perceptions of reality. Deepfakes are also used to promote ethnic hatred and influence voter behavior in India, Nigeria and Myanmar.

The growing use of technology is more visible, but deepfakes are moving away from elite states into grassroots politics. It now is possible to fake fake videos for free, as even an advanced computer can produce convincing fakes, allowing disinformation to expand beyond the media limits. They have responded by developing false detection algorithms but remain some step behind the ever-expanding generative AI models that produce new forms of synthetic realism. These are political implications. Deepfake undermine the epistemic foundation of democracy the belief in observable truth. When citizens lose trust in their senses and institutions, manipulation becomes effortless and accountability is impossible.

Psychological Operations and Behavioral Manipulation

AI's ability to analyze human psychology far exceeds surface persuasion. As affective computing, the unit of AI that recognizes and responds to emotions, political actors can send messages to exploit fear, anger, or hope. A machine learning model based on biometric data such as facial expression or speech tone can predict feelings and tailor messages to impact psychological benefit. This manipulation is already present in digital campaigning. AI algorithms measure thousands of messages at once in a real-time environment, finding which words generate the strongest emotional responses. Among the campaigns in the U.S. that used AI tools in the 2020 election, at the election in 2020, several campaigns employed AI tools to improve advertising to resonate emotion; for example, when the poll was conducted,

facial recognition and sentiment analysis measures were used to assess participants' emotional resonance.

Psychological operations, along with AI analyses, have been combined with biological assessments to influence residents both domestically and internationally. Governments use AI to collect sentiment in social media, to find emerging opposition and to put counter-narratives against opposition movements before opposition moves emerge. The combination of AI and psy-ops suggests the shift from reactive propaganda to predictive control – a governance that has the functions of constantly shifting public opinion and feedback loops. This enables politics to predict power and power via invisible systems that guide behaviour, without putting on the explicit coercion. Citizens believe they are acting freely, but the information environments that they make are algorithmically curated to deliver specific outcomes.

Case Studies: Russia, the United States, and Bangladesh

Russia: State-Engineered Disinformation

Russian is also strategic and systematic in its decision to integrate AI-driven power. Its cyber units use AI to assess and coordinate foreign political trends and to conduct large-scale disinformation campaigns. Russian bots and trolls that flooded the 2016 U.S. elections, most created or amplified by machine learning, reached over 126 million Americans through Facebook and Twitter posts during 2016. But these guerrilla operations, instead of gaining a single candidate, not only weakened trust in democratic institutions but also constituted confusion and division.

The use of AI in cyber-psychological warfare also involves cyber-psychological warfare, in Russian campaigns against Ukraine and the European Union, where synthetic media and automated propaganda promote an advantage for Russia, as well as discrediting Western support. These campaigns illustrate the way in which AI spreads traditional espionage to the digital and psychological frontier.

United States: Commercialized Political Targeting

In contrast, the United States provides evidence of AI's function in a marketized political environment. Political campaigns use AI-driven data analytics firms to microtarget voters. Among digital platforms like Google and Meta are the new tool platforms that allow democratic campaigns to become a data science competition. While not knowingly

manipulative as authoritarian propaganda, these practices pose ethical concerns for privacy, consent, and manipulation. In fact, voters are profiled and targeted based on mental perceptions – vulnerabilities, habits, and bias – that come directly from digital footprints. This artificialization of political power by AI undermines the notion of informed choice in a democracy.

Bangladesh: Digital Authoritarianism through AI

The trend of digital authoritarianism in developing democracy is growing in Bangladesh. The ruling Awami League has claimed using AI to surveillance social media, restrict Internet censorship, and control narrative. Automated systems find dissenting content and counter-messages or disinformation to suppress opposition. The use of AI also creates fake social media interactions, inflating government popularity surveys and sleeping critics. This case illustrates the fact that AI does not serve the advancing economy; it also grants smaller states the ability to enforce political conformity, sometimes under digital modernization.

The Global Consequences of AI-Driven Disinformation

AI-powered disinformation campaigns have serious implications for global stability. They undermine trust in media, institutions and democratic processes. When disinformation disappears from the truth, political legitimacy falls apart, and authoritarian narratives succeed. In addition, transnational AI activities blur the lines between domestic politics and foreign interference, prompting diplomatic and cyberpolitical tensions. According to AI, information weaponization, as in the practice of lying as a strategic weapon, is normalized. In this world, truth becomes relative, and politics depends on the control of flow of data rather than ethical or factual values.

AI, CYBER WARFARE, AND THE WEAPONIZATION OF INFORMATION

AI has redefined warfare and national security. It has transformed battlefields from physical spaces into digital spaces in which information, algorithms, and data are strategic weapon tools. In the 21st century, wars are increasingly fought with bombs and bullets, with cyber intrusions, disinformation campaigns, and autonomous technologies that use machine intelligence. The distinction between war and peace is blurred as nations have developed ways of espionage, sabotage, psychological terror. This section focuses on the AI in cyber

warfare, defense technologies, and the weaponization of digital information in particular as it impacts global security and political power.

The Evolution of Warfare in the AI Age

In traditional warfare, military equipment, and territorial settlements relied on menpower and military supplies. It also brought into being algorithmic warfare where data analysis, automation and decision-making is crucial in offensive and defensive maneuvers. This U.S. Department of Defense's "algorithmic warfare" focuses on the potential of AI to process a vast quantity of intelligence data faster and better than humans. This speed advantage means nations can anticipate threats, strike precision strikes, and conduct cyber operations without human involvement. AI is also turning the psychological landscape of warfare. At the same time, conflict now resides in digital networks where perceptions, beliefs, and information are used to achieve strategic goals without military involvement. For example, the 2022–2023 Russian-Ukraine conflict demonstrated how AI-aided technologies can be used concurrently in both target identification, drone coordination, and information warfare. By the way, AI enables hybrid warfare, forming the merger of dynamic and informational battles, where winning is dependent not just on military power but on narrative control as well.

AI in Cyber Espionage and Strategic Hacking

AI, which operates as cyber espionage, is becoming increasingly sophisticated in securing the digital systems in order to steal information or destroy operations. Machine learning algorithms can analyzed massive datasets to find vulnerabilities in target systems, automate phishing attacks, and avoid traditional cybersecurity defenses. AI can also help humans to hide the way in to secure communication networks, posing the daunting obstacle to detection. All of these have AI-enabled cyber units, which can be utilised to attack and evade other targets, including Russia, China, and the United States. In the coming months, Microsoft and FireEye reported that AI-assisted malware was being used in cyber attacks against government agencies and corporations in the United States and Europe. These attacks took on self-learning algorithms that adapted to countermeasures defended opponents in real time.

In Russia, AI tools are incorporated into military intelligence systems to identify weaknesses in foreign network patterns and perform information extraction from government, defense, and infrastructure systems. In the same vein, the People's Liberation

Army in China has invested heavily in "intelligentized warfare," in which AI-powered surveillance and cyber tools allow geopolitical targets to be driven through the collection of data from global communications networks, satellites and online platforms. AI's presence in cyber espionage has turned data into a strategic commodity, the new oil of geopolitics. A country is fighting not only for territory or trade, but for access to data sources which fuel both economic and military power.

Autonomous Weapons and the Militarization of AI

As the militarization of AI has brought in a new generation of autonomous weapons systems (AWS) capable of making independent targeting and attack decisions without human intervention, AI militarization has created new new breed of AWS. These include AI-guided drones, robotic combat vehicles and automated missile defense systems. For instance, the U.S. military's Project Maven uses AI to analyze drone footage, identify threats, and recommend strike action. Russia has also carried out trials of AI-powered robot tanks and drone swarms that function for battlefield intelligence. Israel's defense industry has developed AI-controlled drone systems that can locate and neutralize targets as evidenced by the AI systems deployed in the defence sector in Israel.

But the idea of autonomous weapons causes great ethical and legal questions. Critics argue that allowing machines to make fatal decisions violates international humanitarian law, which in interpreting combatants' identities requires human judgment to distinguish combatants and civilians. There is also accountability, - who is responsible when an AI system commits an unlawful war - the programmer, the commander, or the machine itself? The world remains divided about how such systems can be regulated. As part of the UN Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), many discussions have been ongoing regarding the prohibition of "killer robots", but that process has been slow due to conflicting national interests. In the United States, China, and Russia they believe AI is a fundamental component of the future defense strategy and refuse to restrict what impedes their technology to a limit that might jeopardize its capabilities.

Information as a Weapon: The Rise of Cognitive Warfare

This is a vital aspect of the AI history that informs the weaponsization of information. Cognitive warfare is not an abomination for infrastructure, but a way to alter people's thinking and perceptions. This involves manipulation of public opinion, election

results, and social cohesion by using social media, news platforms, and digital communication.

AI-driven cognitive warfare, unlike traditional propaganda, relies on precision targeting. Algorithms classify society's divisions race, religion, class, ideology and increase them through automated content distribution. This strategy destabilizes local nations by dissolving trust and increasing polarization. AI systems can even create false trends thereby creating the illusion of public consensus. Coordinated bot activities can make fringe ideologies look ordinary, causing political institutions and media to ask politicians and media to react to fictionalised stories. That confusion is advantageous to those who seek to replace truth with controlled reality, a tactics increasingly embraced in authoritarian states.

AI and the Global Arms Race

The technology of AI is making a global weapons race and has led to a global arms race for the role of AI in defense, cyber, and cyber weapon systems. The United States, China, and Russia lead this race with billions in military AI research. It is also in the case of the Joint Artificial Intelligence Center, China's Next Generation AI Development Plan and Russia's AI in Defense Initiative that AI supremacy has become increasingly popular. There is no gap in this dynamic for developing nations. India, Iran, and Turkey are making AI the subject of surveillance, defense manufacturing, and cyber operations. Even small nations, such as Bangladesh and Nigeria, are adopting AI tools for border monitoring, internal security, and counterterrorism, often with the help of larger power.

Although, the use of military AI is an expensive one. The more nations acquire autonomous or semi-autonomous systems, the greater is the possibility of accidental escalation. A simple software glitch or algorithmic mistake could trigger international conflict. In addition, the spreading of lethal algorithms beyond the state is an enormous concern for global peace as private defense firms enter the AI arms industry.

The Intersection of Cybercrime, AI, and Political Warfare

This use of AI is being increasingly utilized by criminal groups and rogue states to commit politically motivated cybercrime. Examples of these AI tools are Ransomware attacks; they identify high value targets and exploit vulnerabilities in real-time. This attack not only disrupts economies, but can paralyze governments and influence political decision making. AI has also enabled it to create synthetic identities that are used to hide money laundering, election interference, and espionage. AI was used by criminal syndicates to

produce biometric information, manipulate digital records and extort insecure systems. A "dark convergence" is a space where politics, technology, crime combine to form hybrid threats, drawing on the connections between organized crime and political war.

For instance, AI-funded criminal activities have been alleged to be a means of statecraft for governments. For example, cyber groups linked to North Korea have reportedly used AI-based scripts to steal coins in crypto thefts. Like at least a few examples, reports suggest that AI-based surveillance systems under some authoritarian regimes have been employed in order to silence opposition, identify protesters and help illegal detention.

Global Security Implications

The principles of warfare based on the Geneva Conventions are inadequate for the controlling of machines that act independently and across borders. Asymmetric risks may exist in small states or non-state actors because AI warfare generates cheap AI systems that enable small states or non-state actors to defend their world. In one instance, AI-fueled drone swarms or cyberattacks may be able to annihilate critical infrastructure on very little resources. This democratization of digital power mitigates the deterrence effect that military supremacy had maintained, potentially making conflicts more frequent and unpredictable. Also, data weaponization has repercussions on geopolitical decision-making for nations that harvest and process vast data. By this point, data and algorithms are becoming more important than the territory or oil reserves ever were.

Ethical and Legal Dilemmas

It is at this fundamental ethical question of AI's role in warfare and information manipulation that fundamental ethical questions arise. Does machines have the power to be able to make life and death decisions? Can propaganda algorithms be controlled by international law? Is digital manipulation of foreigners part of aggression? Its legal instruments have no answer. In its use of the international law applicable to cyber warfare, the Tallinn Manual on International Law Applying to Cyber Warfare recognizes cyber operations as possible acts of war, but it takes AI's role in the process. Machines can respond faster than humans, creating conflict before diplomats even realize they have seen protests.

The need to have international AI governance institutions, in accordance with the responsibilities, transparency, and human oversight of using AI for military and political use is urgent. Without such frameworks, artificial weaponization of AI could produce a new

unstable world: an insufflation of the computational power and control over control, whose power is determined by the computer rather than diplomacy or ethics.

POLITICAL MANIPULATION THROUGH AI IN THE GLOBAL WEAPON TRADE, ORGANIZED CRIME, AND ECONOMIC ESPIONAGE

One of the most devastating transformations of the 21st century, the connection between AI and global politics, crime, and economy. Although AI offers efficiency and innovation, its misuse in the area of arms trade, organized crime, and espionage has transformed political power through the lens of weapon trade, organized crime, and espionage. The political landscape is no longer shaped by military power or diplomatic engagement but increasingly by data, algorithms, and autonomous technologies. In addition to being a strategic asset, and possible weapon, AI is becoming both a strategic tool and a weapon which could strengthen power, destabilize nations and affect global economics.

Table 4: *AI techniques shaping electoral behavior and manipulation.*

Category	AI Technique Used	Example / Case Study	Political Outcome
Voter Profiling	Machine learning algorithms analyzing demographic and behavioral data	Cambridge Analytica scandal (U.S. & UK)	Enabled micro-targeted persuasion, reducing voter objectivity
Predictive Analytics	AI models predicting voter turnout and sentiment	2020 U.S. Presidential Campaign	Allowed data-driven message timing and location-based outreach
Automated Messaging	Chatbots and AI-driven response systems on social media	India's 2019 Elections	Created illusion of personalized communication with candidates
Content Personalization	Recommender systems curating political ads	Facebook and TikTok ad targeting	Increased echo chambers and confirmation bias
Deepfake Campaign Materials	Synthetic videos and manipulated media	Regional elections in Eastern Europe	Misled voters and spread disinformation rapidly
Sentiment Monitoring	Natural Language Processing (NLP) analyzing online mood	Brazil's 2022 Elections	Helped campaigns adjust rhetoric in real-time

AI and the Global Weapon Trade: The Digital Militarization of Politics

To that extent, modern geopolitics has become a place where AI warcraft becomes an important weapon. Advanced algorithms are now responsible for surveillance, targeting, logistics, and predictive analysis in warfare. AI-guided drones and AWS can identify and strike targets without any human intervention. This change is not only technology but is an important political change, the way lives and death will be automated, thus putting human involvement and ethical control at risk. General military leaders such as the United States, Russia and China have long invested heavily in AI-based military modernization programs. The Joint Artificial Intelligence Center at the U.S. Department of Defense (JAIC) combines AI into the national defence; Russia's "Era Military Innovation Technopolis" works on autonomous combat systems and cyber-defense systems. The "Military-Civil Fusion Strategy" in China's "Military-Civil Fusion Strategy" merges civilian AI research and military applications and allows the state to rapidly commercialize defense technology. These events represent a modern-day AI arms race, the Cold War nuclear war, and, but, in cyberspace, information systems and cognitive warfare.

AI-based weapons are also political agents as well. Nations deploy AI-based weapons to form alliances or power. For instance, Russia's procurement of AI-guided drones and surveillance technology to regimes in Syria, Venezuela and parts of Africa reinforces political dependency and extends Moscow's geopolitical base. The U.S., too, promotes AI-integrated defense systems among NATO allies in order to preserve technological superiority and political unity. This model represents the modern form of digital imperialism as an analogy to AI weapon trade as a form of modern esthetic imperialism in which technology and culture are symmetrically dependent in relation to advanced countries. Yet the development of autonomous weapons poses serious ethical and legal concerns as well. Who will be responsible when an AI controlled drone incorrectly matches a target? What happens to machine learning algorithms in combat? Indeed, AI militarization is growing faster than global governance increases risk of mistaken, rising, and political manipulation.

AI in Organized Crime and Transnational Networks

AI is a leap forward in their sophistication, despite the fact that organized crime has evolved along the lines of the encryption of messages and dark webs. Criminal organizations use AI to operate effectively, anonymise, and manipulate law enforcement systems. Models of machine learning are used to analyze transactions, identify vulnerabilities and automate

illicit business including drug trafficking, money laundering and human smuggling. To use example, AI-driven algorithms can analyze shipping routes to detect less than visible entry points for contraband, predict police patrol time schedules, or even falsify biometric data at border crossings. Deepfake technology has allowed criminals to impersonate executives or political figures in real-time, enabling a huge-scale cash-smuggling operation and disinformation campaigns. A year ago, a secret voice tricked a CEO to transfer over €200,000 to a fraudulent account, as demonstrated by a case where artificial intelligence could connect cybercrime with political manipulation.

In addition, transnational criminal networks are employing AI-based tools to influence politics indirectly. For instance, organizations like organised crime groups can draw online narratives about elections, police practices, or public opinion based on bots and fake news networks. For instance, drugs cartels in Latin America used automated social media propaganda to elicit hateful anti-narcotics officials and influence local elections in favour of them. AI, crime and politics are a form of algorithmic corruption, as data manipulation replaces conventional coercion or bribery as a form of political control. The state actors also exploit criminal infrastructures for political gain. REvil, Conti, and EvilCorp have been linked to state-funded ransomware campaigns targeting foreign governments and corporations. These AI-augmented attacks bring criminal ends and geopolitical causes; destabilizing neighbouring economies or punishing countries for war with political parties. The distinction between state and non-state cyber operations complicates attribution because in the face of the blurring lines between states and non-state cyber operations, governments can retain plausible deniability while pursuing strategic goals.

AI and Economic Espionage: The New Frontier of Political Power

Artificial intelligence has been an artificial weapon in economic espionage, where the invisibility of industrial, technological, or financial information is sped up. Many espionage relied on human intelligence (HUMINT) or signals intelligence (SIGINT), but AI now allows machines to analyze massive amounts of data in order to uncover market vulnerabilities, trade secrets and innovation pipelines. These technologies, by definition, allow countries and corporations to compete in global competition with no doubt in a way never seen before. In it, AI in China is being strategically deployed in data acquisition. China has integrated AI into the state surveillance, cybersecurity, and industrial espionage systems to accelerate domestic innovation and reduce dependence on Western technology. The AI is

also used by Western intelligence agencies in stock markets, commodity pricing, and supply chain security often used for political forecasting and strategic trade decisions.

The U.S. National Security Agency (NSA) and U.K. government communications chief GCHQ use machine learning to assess global financial flows and patterns of economic manipulation. These tools are double-sided; they can prevent money laundering and terrorism funding but can act as politically motivated coercion on rival states or dissident groups. AI also reformed corporate espionage, enabling competitors to reverse-engineer proprietary technologies, scrap intellectual property from online repositories and infiltrate privacy-protected data systems. AI-powered tools can use insider behavior to learn to read, read and transfer sensitive data, without the intervention of human detection. These capabilities blur the distinction between economic intelligence and cyber warfare; stolen trade secrets can inevitably lead to national industrial policy. The political implications are enormous. It is no longer economic espionage that is simply damaging corporate competitiveness; it is transforming global power. Asymmetrical countries that dominate data driven espionage gain some advantages over other nations, allowing them to manipulate global markets, trigger economic sanctions and even destabilize foreign currency. This increases the kind of digital mercantilism which eliminates fossil resources like oil or gold as the main source of geopolitical capital.

Theoretical Context and Ethical Implications

As a result, the theoretical framework for understanding AI as a manipulator for politics depends on Realist and Critical Security Studies perspectives. From this perspective, states seek to control power via technology and AI is the latest means of doing so. But critical theorists stress that AI creates structural inequalities, enabling dominant states and corporations to steal from less developed areas by extracting, monitoring, and dependency on data extraction. The fusion of AI with crime, warfare and espionage brings new challenges for ethically. The lack of clear accountability mechanisms in AI-assistant decisions undermines the basic international humanitarian law principles. This also undermines trust in institutions and erodes democratic norms by using AI in economic espionage and organized crime. The citizen becomes a data point for manipulation, and truth becomes a contested algorithmic construct.

Global Governance and Future Outlook

This rapid development of AI into criminal, military, and espionage systems has eclipsed international regulation. The UN, European Union, and OECD have attempted ethical AI governance but still have not fully implemented it. The greatest risk comes in developing countries, particularly Africa, Latin America and South Asia because they also frequently function as test cases for AI-fueled political influence, cybercrime and weapon sales. It is therefore necessary to discuss not only the technical standards but also the political economy of AI control of data, who uses it and who is responsible for the outcomes. Without careful monitoring, AI will continue to be used by elite power-sharing, increasing inequality and global instability.

AI, MEDIA CONTROL, AND PUBLIC OPINION ENGINEERING

The battleground of politics is changing from the physical spaces to the digital ecosystems in the 21st century with AI turning the field into a digital arena. AI is now playing a central role in shaping public opinion, making consent, and keeping political discourses alive through algorithms, automation, media production, and data influencing. In fact, the fusion of media and machine intelligence allowed states, corporations, and even non-state actors to manipulate people to greater extent, quietly, in elections, political debates, and even culture. This artificially dominant influence from AI has become an invisible but powerful tool for political power. It uses recommendation algorithms, targeted advertising, bot amplification, and synthetic content to influence what people see, think, and comment on. This section discusses how AI alters information ecosystems, the effects on democracy and freedom of thought, and how major powers and political entities use AI to manipulate public perception across the world.

AI in Information Ecosystems: From News to Narratives

The media landscape starts with AI as the core of modern communication. Algorithms now determine which stories' movements, what opinions do emerge and which narratives disintegrate into lame. The best model of engagement clicks, shares and views, in search engines and social media applications and video recommendation systems relies on machine learning models for machine learning. This "attention economy" encourages sensationalism, polarization, and emotional manipulation. If AI translates this dynamic into a control mechanism, it is political. These algorithms can be used to identify populations based

on psychological characteristics such as fear, anger or loyalty and shape content accordingly. For example, the Cambridge Analytica scandal of 2016 in the United States demonstrated that machine compiled and processed personal data from millions of Facebook users and trained to make psychographic profiles, enabling its use to accurately target politically directed advertising targeted at emotions.

In authoritarian situations, like Russia and China, such AI rules are employed to block dissent and to amplify state narratives. The Internet Research Agency of Russia (IRA) uses AI-led bots and machine content creators to bombard the internet with anti-government propaganda and silence opposition voices. In China, the Great Firewall and Golden Shield Project use AI to monitor, censor, and redirect public discourse so that political sensitive topics don't become viral. The AI moderation systems automatically recognize and delete posts with forbidden words or sentiment patterns that make up the cyberspace, creating a virtual reality that is sanitized.

Table 5: *AI capabilities in cyber warfare and espionage.*

Category	AI Function	Example / Case Study	Strategic or Political Impact
Automated Threat Detection	AI systems analyze network behavior to detect anomalies faster than humans.	U.S. Cyber Command AI defense systems	Strengthened cybersecurity resilience against cyberattacks.
Offensive Cyber Operations	AI automates hacking attempts and identifies system vulnerabilities.	Alleged Russian GRU operations using AI-enhanced phishing	Increased speed and precision of cyber offensives.
Predictive Intelligence	Machine learning forecasts potential attacks using past data patterns.	NATO's AI-based cyber prediction initiative	Enhanced readiness and preemptive defense capabilities.
AI-Driven Espionage	AI processes massive data for intelligence gathering and pattern recognition.	China's data-mining of foreign communications	Expanded geopolitical intelligence and surveillance capacity.
Autonomous Cyber Weapons	Self-learning malware that adapts and evolves in real-time.	Use of AI worms in hybrid warfare environments	Raises risks of uncontrollable cyber escalation.
Defense and Counter-Attack Systems	AI coordinates rapid responses to cyber breaches.	Israel's Iron Dome digital defense integration	Improved national defense automation and real-time interception.

AI-Generated and Synthetic Media: Deepfakes and Political Deception

These artificial media are one of the most disturbing trends in media manipulation - the rise of AI-generated synthetic media then known as deepfakes. Deepfakes can create real-world videos or audio recordings of people saying or doing things they never did. This deepfake is political, and may be the driving force behind wars. In 2020, a darkly faked video revealed that Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky surrendered to Russian soldiers. But, it quickly became clear that AI-generated misinformation could be used in warfare to demoralize people and disembowel events within the real world. In South Asia, AI-generated political endorsements and fabricated interviews have been seen in South Asian elections, where synthetic "voters" have shown up supporting the ruling Awami League.

Deepfake technologies are also used for character robbery and political framing. For example, opponents can be digitally inserted into dangerous situations that destabilize them, or they emerge morally dissatisfied by being compared with them in the media. The danger is not only believing deepfake, but in erosion of trust itself, a phenomenon that scholars call "liar's dividend." As AI manipulation becomes widespread, people begin to distrust everything media and that corruption can make it easier for corrupt actors to dismiss valid evidence as fake.

Social Media Automation: Bots, Trolls, and Algorithmic Amplification

Social media platforms serve as a prime battleground for AI-driven political manipulation. Nowadays, automated accounts, usually called bots and troll networks, are now used as tools for digital propaganda. These bots can imitate human conversations, share political content, and multiply selected narratives over multiple platforms, using NLP and reinforcement learning. These digital controls on influence operations were the flexibility of AI-driven influence operations in Russia's disinformation networks and in the 2016 and 2020 U.S. elections. Tens of thousands of fake accounts were streamed onto social networks and Twitter and Facebook in divisive messages designed to draw voters apart. AI would make these bots authentic, mimicking words in a way that was familiar, and use local slang in an effort to represent the voices in real people, even while emotionally discussing emotional responses to real people.

In developing democracies, these tactics are being replicated. The AI-powered bots in India have been used to gain political activists' political will and to attack journalists critical of government policies. Organized digital armies are emerging in Nigeria and Kenya

to influence elections narratives, using AI to generate trending hashtags, memes, and even fake news websites. These AI driven campaigns also exploit social platforms itself. Algorithms emphasize engagement meaning emotional or controversial posts are promoted in spite of factual accuracy. These feedback loops enable public discourse to be the loudest and most fragmented, drowning out moderating or balanced discourse.

State Surveillance and Opinion Engineering

AI controls elections and debates beyond the use of influencing decision-making or behavior. Governments now use AI-powered systems to track citizens' opinions, identify critics and predict rallies. The most notable example is China's Social Credit System, which processes AI to analyze financial transactions, online activity, and social interaction to make attributions to "trust scores," which determine access to services or freedoms. One citizen who criticizes the government online may be blacklisted from jobs, loans or travel.

Media Manipulation and Electoral Integrity

Its combination of artificially generated misinformation, social media automation, and algorithmic amplification has seriously damaged electoral integrity. At every turn elections are prone to manipulation and data-driven manipulation. AI campaigns use machine algorithms to impose specific propaganda on voters to discourage attendance, disentangle the public with lies or lie-doers. Even the sensation of interference can invalidate outcomes. In 2020, the U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) reported on hundreds of false narratives that were amplified by bots to undermine election trust. The same has been done in African and Asian elections as well, where AI-generated content has been used to simulate grassroots support and make it appear to be public consensus. These operations are often sponsored by state-owned troll farms or by private data analytics companies that sell influence as a service.

AI, POLITICAL CORRUPTION, AND FINANCIAL MANIPULATION

AI is changing governance and communication, as well as the hidden networks of political corruption and financial manipulation that run behind official systems of power. The modern political economy no longer relies solely on physical transactions, bribes or cash exchanges; it has become a data driven corruption in which algorithms, predictive models and digital currencies are employed to conceal, transfer and legitimize illicit wealth. This

transformation has made corruption more complex, less evident and so much harder to spot. The political influence of AI-based financial manipulation has also become a weapon of political power. Governments, corporations and elite networks use AI technology to manipulate markets, sell resources, predict policy effects, even destabilize rival economies. A new type of algorithmic governance emerged from the convergence of AI and financial systems: political power is exerted by controlling digital infrastructure and financial algorithms rather than bureaucracies. This section analyzes how AI is changing corruption, financial crimes, and political manipulation and the implications for global accountability and economic justice.

AI and the Evolution of Political Corruption

In ancient times corruption was a whole bribery, embezzlement, nepotism or misappropriation of public funds. But in the digitalized governance, corruption has moved into algorithms. The political leaders and elite now use AI-driven governance tools to secure power, conceal economic irregularities and manipulate procurement or election funding. For example, government budgeting and contract allocation systems can be trained or biased for certain individuals or corporations. As algorithms or data manipulation is used, governments can pay in public funds to politically connected people as "automated decision-making." A case of digital governance projects, which are often given foreign funding in developing countries, has been argued to be a proxy for ruling parties or loyalists.

This is a major problem with AI systems because they are not transparent. The "black box" problem, where AI's decision making processes are obscured or impossible to comprehend, allows corrupt actors to manipulate outcomes while asserting neutrality. A biased algorithm can approve contracts, select beneficiaries, or issue loans without any interference. In a way, AI becomes a powerful cover against corruption that is re-established through the illusion of technological objectivity.

AI in Financial Manipulation and Economic Control

And AI's power to access vast amounts of financial data has transformed market prediction, trading and investment management. But it has been used for economic manipulation and insider trading in unprecedented numbers. Using HFT algorithms, big-spending financial players can exploit the microsecond advantage to manipulate stock prices, currencies and commodities and influence entire economies. Governments and politicians use these AI to influence capital flows and influence economic indicators as an adjunct to

maintaining political stability or influencing public perception. For example, algorithms can be developed to artificially stabilize currencies during elections and create temporary market booms to justify economic success. These activities blur the lines between economic policy and political propaganda. Also, AI systems can use market-state behaviors and forecast the impact of policy decisions to give political leaders access to predictive knowledge previously not available to the public. This informational symmetry allows them to be alert in the absence of new laws or policies before they are announced. This is algorithmic insider trading where political power is exploited in private through the privileged access to predictive data. Over the world, AI is also used to manipulate the economies; digital sanctions and financial surveillance can be found in the cybersphere. Western nations use AI to enforce international sanctions, tracking and freezing assets associated with sanctioned individuals or governments. While the accountability is often justified, these systems also function as political pawns, enabling powerful nations to dominate global finance.

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governments. While the accountability is often justified, these systems also function as political pawns, enabling powerful nations to dominate global finance.

AI, Campaign Finance, and Dark Money

Another aspect of corruption is the impact that AI has on political campaign funding. AI-driven fundraising systems and microtargeting solutions have revolutionized campaign management and made channels for illuminating funding and influence. Political consultants use AI to understand and automate donor behavior in the field of political consulting, making it difficult to pinpoint the source of funding. AI may be used in some cases to disguise foreign interference in elections. Assembled within algorithms, funds can be routed from cash-oriented digital wallets or shell organizations. During the 2020 U.S. elections cybersecurity researchers found networks of AI powered bots that brought pages on crowdfunding sites of foreign influencers to appear in legitimate accounts.

In addition to AI, "Dark money" - political spending for non-profit groups that is not required to reveal donors – has adopted AI tools to add even more impact. These organizations use sentiment analysis and predictive modeling to identify the best regions, narratives, and candidates to fund. The result is a feedback loop in which AI determines the use of money but also reinforces the political motivations of those who provided it, often without public awareness or accountability.

AI, Financial Surveillance, and Authoritarian Control

While AI allows corruption and manipulation, it is also used by states to monitor and control financial behavior. Under authoritarian regimes, AI-based surveillance measures collect transactions to locate and punish those who are offended, or who might be politically unfit. While looking at digital payments, tax records and social media activities, governments are better able to identify those financing opposition movements or bolstering rival parties. This trend is illustrated by social credit and fintech collaboration that uses AI systems to identify the financial behaviour of citizens as political loyalty, punishing conformity and punishing dissent. There is no federal law, in Russia, that requires an AI-based surveillance of NGOs and journalists for "foreign agent" monitoring. These are becoming similar in several developed countries, where AI-enhanced central banking systems are used to suppress political opponents and impose financial regulation as an underlying mechanism for reforming the central banking system. This combined AI, finance and surveillance create a paradox: in the face of AI, it promotes anti-corruption and transparency, but simultaneously

strengthens authoritarian control and political manipulation. What drives the economy, and ultimately the state, are the people who control the data and its algorithms.

AI, CRIME NETWORKS, AND THE WEAPONIZATION OF POLITICAL POWER

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has transcended its initial promise as a tool of innovation and efficiency to become one of the most potent instruments of political, criminal, and military power in the modern era. In today's interconnected world, the lines separating politics, organized crime, and warfare have become increasingly blurred all woven together through the algorithmic logic of AI systems. From money laundering and illicit surveillance to automated weapon production and psychological manipulation, AI is now deeply embedded in the structures of global influence and coercion. This section explores how AI amplifies criminal enterprises, facilitates corruption, and transforms both political and military dominance into algorithmically driven systems of control.

Table 6: *Global power dynamics in the AI political economy.*

Region / Actor	Strategic Focus in AI	Key Investments / Policies	Geopolitical Implications
United States	Innovation leadership, defense AI, ethical AI frameworks	DARPA AI programs, CHIPS Act, Big Tech R&D	Maintains technological dominance and global narrative control
China	Surveillance, military AI, state-driven innovation	Made in China 2025, Social Credit System, AI City projects	Expands digital authoritarianism and data-driven governance
Russia	Cyber warfare, disinformation, and military AI	National AI Strategy (2019), hybrid warfare doctrines	Strengthens geopolitical influence through digital aggression
European Union	Regulation, human-centered AI, and digital sovereignty	AI Act, GDPR, Horizon Europe funding	Seeks ethical balance and protection of democratic systems
Developing Nations (e.g., India, Nigeria, Brazil)	AI for governance and economic inclusion	National AI Strategies for Development	Risk of dependency on Western or Chinese AI infrastructure
Global Corporations	Data monopoly, platform control, and lobbying power	Google, Meta, Amazon, Alibaba	Shift from state-based power to corporate algorithmic governance

AI and the Expansion of Global Crime Networks

This AI has been found by criminal enterprises throughout the globe to have been a new weapon for expansion, precision and invisibility. AI algorithms, which allow transnational crime syndicates to automate smuggling routes, analyze border surveillance data, and predict police behavior, are used by transnational criminal syndicates. Predictive analytics helps traffickers and smugglers avoid weak security points while AI-based deep learning models generate real-world deepfake models for identity theft, extortion, and disinformation campaigns. For example, Europol has reported a burgeoning cyber fraud via phishing targeting synthetic voices and faces used to impersonate bank officials or political figures. As well, Latin American drug cartels have also started using drones equipped with AI-guided navigation systems to transport drugs and avoid radar detection. AI-automated payments systems, in West Africa and parts of Southeast Asia, appear linked to illegal wildlife trafficking and money laundering policies sponsored by political elites.

In some cases the networks are not directly the winners for governments. Political actors use AI-assisted crime networks to obtain illicit campaign financing or silence opposition. It represents an immoral alliance of politics with crime and an example of AI attempting to support corruption in weak democracies or authoritarian regimes where power and impunity overlap.

Political Corruption and Algorithmic Financial Manipulation

It is still politics – corruption is always invisible but AI has made corruption more sophisticated, invisible and data driven. A mathematical manipulation of states' budgets, fraud in procurement contracts, and even a massive surveillance of illegal wealth transfers from corrupt officials and oligarchs can be used to manipulate state budgets, falsify contracts, and hide illegal wealth transfers in unprecedented detail. AI systems capable of executing a huge array of financial data can identify and exploit loopholes in anti-corruption strategies. Some regions also have reportedly used machine learning to predict and overrun regulatory investigations. W whistleblowers in Nigeria, Brazil, and Eastern Europe have revealed how public money was routed through a AI-enabled shell company and digital laundering system that constructs complex transactions across multiple jurisdictions.

AI and the Global Weapon Business

AI has fundamentally transformed the global arms trade, as wars from war to the data-driven battle. Governments are now investing hugely in AI-powered drones, predictive

targeting systems, and autonomous vehicles capable of traveling without human supervision. This digital arms race involves projects under the umbrella of the U.S. Department of Defense's "Project Maven"; Russia's cyber warfare units, and China's autonomous military robot programs. It is not just for the state actors that developments unfold. Private defense contractors, tech firms, and shadow arms dealers now operate in a vast gray zone, producing dual-use AI technologies which can be used for surveillance, riot control, or political repression. For example, facial recognition systems used for city security in China and Israel have been exported to dozens of countries, including authoritarian regimes, where they are used to track oppositionists and activists.

The AI arms trade has also penetrated the black market. Terrorist groups and rebel groups now use open-source AI to better match weapons, hackers, and create propaganda. The complex nature of this combination of technologies, ideology and violence is one of the key challenges to world peace and democratic governance.

Political Violence and State-Sponsored Cybercrime

The use of AI to fight cybercrime and political wars provides a narrative of how national security has evolved into a contest of algorithmic contestation. Cyberattacks are no longer the only source of human hackers but are becoming more automated with machine learning. A computer model can map network vulnerabilities, create malicious code and execute disinformation campaigns at scales and speed once impossible. More prominent in most of these are Russia's alleged use of AI generated bots in the 2016 and 2020 U.S. elections. Also, China's use of sentiment analysis software to monitor global media narratives allows it to influence public opinion abroad while still retaining some control of home. North Korea also has employed AI-enabled systems for cryptocurrency theft, and digital crime has generated funds for its weapons programs. By contrast, in many developing countries political elites apply the same tools domestically. Hence, AI is silent enforcer of political power digital extension of state power.

AI, Surveillance, and the Criminalization of Dissent

A significant factor in political repression is AI-driven surveillance. Facial recognition, biometric tracking and predictive police police surveillance technologies previously intended to be used for public safety have been expanded to the political battlefield. China, Russia, and Iran have large clusters of AI-powered monitoring systems

capable of monitoring protesters, reading online conversations and linking digital behaviors to political loyalty indexes.

This surveillance runs beyond borders. AI-based spyware and false disinformation campaigns trickled into the minds of exiled dissidents and journalists, leading to their defection and discreditment. This algorithmic profiling has been seen by modern autocracies as criminalizing political opposition. This is particularly dangerous because AI surveillance is not political justification, and the process is automatically enhancing those who are called threats, but they remain invisible.

The Ethical Dilemma: Balancing Security and Freedom

The surveillance of the political world using AI technology has become the most effective tool in repression. Facial recognition, biometric tracking and predictive police law enforcement technologies, intended for public safety purposes, have shifted toward political control. Despite widespread AI-driven monitoring technologies in China, Russia, and Iran, they use very complex AI-powered monitoring systems that can identify protesters, scan online conversations, and connect political behavior to political loyalty indexes.

This surveillance goes outside borders. Unescaped dissidents and journalists are tracked by artificial intelligence software and lies on deep-fake disinformation campaigns that undermine their reputation. The criminalization of political opposition with algorithmic profiling has become a hallmark of modern autocracies. While it does require political justification for its existence, this is particularly dangerous because AI surveillance allows it to never be controlled by political motivation; in fact, it does change from generation to generation, and it constantly refined who is a threat.

CONCLUSION

The role of artificial intelligence has expanded beyond the boundaries of a technology; it is one of the most effective tools in international politics, manipulating ideology and shaping governance itself. Yet AI is not only a scientific tool; it is a political actor, a invisible yet powerful agent that affects the perceptions and behavior of many societies around the world. From the disinformation campaigns perpetrated by Russian networks to voter analysis by American political strategists and AI-driven narratives tied to parties like the Awami League in Bangladesh, it becomes clear that politics today is

increasingly embedded within algorithms. During the twentieth century, the battlefield of power has expanded beyond streets and parliaments, to data servers and digital platforms. In the post-geographic world, politics is now global, decentralized, and omnipresent – in fact "heard everywhere".

The rise of AI in politics is a promise and a danger. The ability to create more effective governance models, real-time data driven policies, and citizen engagement with predictive modeling and public sentiment analysis has a new focus. It allows governments to anticipate crises, modify welfare policies and improve national security. In other words, the same algorithms that enable states to govern effectively are being used to control citizens, suppress opposition, and manipulate truth; on the other hand. This technological age is a period of ethical conflict between innovation and abuse. As video distortion rips out reality, bots make consent, and algorithmic targeting elicits political thought, democracy is the silent but existential threat not from overt dictatorship, but from the invisible hand of data-driven control.

In addition, the deployment of AI into military and security architectures has weaponized information itself. During this process, autonomous drones, intelligent surveillance systems, and predictive targeting algorithms have transformed warfare into a space where machines can make decisions of life and death. Politics is no longer the stipulation of armies or economies, but the control of data, algorithms, and information flow. With highly advanced AI, the benefits vary not only in war but also in shaping global narratives. This has brought about a new form of digital imperialism: control of artificial intelligence systems is geopolitical power. A nuclear war between the United States, China and Russia was a rivalry between an arm of the twentieth century and a nuclear war but it is far more subtle and pervasive than other, so far more superficial, and pervasive, of all social life.

The moral complexity of modern politics is increased by AI's influence on global crime and corruption. Criminal organisations, corrupt elites and authoritarian regimes have abused AI to turn money launder, manipulate economies, and suppress discontent. These sophisticated algorithms allow illegal networks to predict violations, automate cybercrime, and disguise illicit financial transactions. In developing countries where government systems on digital governance are insecure, politicians have allegedly used AI to manipulate elections, silence journalists and fabricate support. This misuse of technology also destroys democratic

institutions and makes AI a tool of digital tyranny. Having AI combined with politics corruption and organized crime, shows that technology itself is neutral, its morality depends upon the hands that control it and the motives that drive its use.

The world's media has been also reconfigured by artificial intelligence. But algorithms now determine what amplificating news is, what stories are changing, and which narratives dominate public consciousness. Social media technologies, facilitated by engagement-based AI, have been, on the surface, political weapons, playing the role of politically manipulating social discourse, polarizing communities, and producing echo chambers that divide groups ideologically. This movement has led to greater difficulty for citizens to discern fact from fiction as AI-generated disinformation fills digital space. When the source of truth is found, journalism struggles to overcome synthetic media and manipulating algorithms. As a result, a machine, that only has one interest in virality and one focus on veracity, reconstrues the public space as one that is the very foundation of democratic debate.

The problem is also that AI offers an historic opportunity for us to revolutionize politics for the better. If harnessed appropriately, AI can bring transparency, policy accuracy, and the citizens to act more meaningfully in governance. Predictive analysis can help the allocation of resources more effectively, lessen corruption through automated audit, and reinforce electoral integrity through secure digital verification systems. But, the moral foundations necessary to accomplish this vision should exist in societies that are strong ethical ties between innovation and human rights. Governments must ban algorithmic bias, establish autonomous AI control agencies and maintain the transparent, straightforward, accountable models of public-based AI. As this new political order will develop, education and public awareness will play a vital role. The world needs to acknowledge that AI is not just a technological challenge, but a political and moral responsibility to the creators and uses of it: a mirror representing the values of those responsible for designing and supporting it.

To succeed, the story of AI and global political power is about power: who holds it, how it is used, who it serves. Power is not only shared with governments or corporations but it is distributed through algorithms that shape perception and control access to truth. Politics is truly heard everywhere, but the loudest voices are not human; they are algorithms, designed to silence certain agendas, while repress them. It is through the ethical consciousness of humanity that success is made. If nations strive for fair, transparent, and

justice in technology development, AI can become a force for peace and equality. But if left unchecked, it will become an invisible empire of control that controls minds through data and not reason. These will not be the decisions of machines, but the moral values governing politics in AI era. At the end of the day, artificial intelligence is not redefining politics; it is about defining what it means to be free, informed, and human in a world where power is spoken not only by leaders, but by codes that control who gets to hear it.

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