CHAPTER 4

The Digital Demagogue: A Qualitative Analysis of AI-Generated Narratives in the 2024 U.S. Election

TAJRIN RAHMAN TISHA
MOHAMMAD MURAD PRODHAN

ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the use of artificial intelligence (AI) by domestic political actors in the production of persuasive content in the 2024 United States presidential election. The research problem illustrates the absence of a systematic qualitative analysis of the internal rhetorical mechanisms that influence the perception of voters in political texts, images, and audiovisual materials created by artificial intelligence. This study adopts a qualitative interpretive design that draws on classical rhetorical analysis and reflexive thematic coding of a curated sample of 214 AI-generated artefacts from fact-checking repositories, scholarly archives, and investigative journalism reports. Generative AI is hypothesized to enable a new form of outsourcing that is referred to as "persuasive outsourcing," where emotional identity maintenance is outsourced to algorithmic systems on an unprecedented scale and level of personalization. The results show three major rhetorical strategies: hyper-personalized emotional appeals (pathos), synthetic authority construction (ethos), and mutually irreconcilable factual claims (fragmented logos). These techniques are part of democratic fragmentation, as they undermine common factual bases and accentuate affective polarization. The study provides theoretical analysis of the issue of political communication mediated by AI and practical suggestions for journalists, educators, and policymakers.

Introduction

The term "good governance" refers to the foundation of democratic societies. In essence, a democratic system must include fair elections, representative institutions, and a clear, accountable, equitable, and participative management of public affairs. Good governance is when citizens have confidence in their institutions, are actively involved in civic life, and are willing to accept the legitimacy of decisions they make collectively, even if they do not like them[1]. At the opposite end of the spectrum, however, democracy is a shrivelled form when governance is weak, when accountability is replaced by corruption, when transparency is replaced by opacity, and when citizens are systematically excluded. In this context, AI has the potential to significantly enhance governance and pose significant threats to the integrity of democracy. As AI's role in governance increases, its transformative power is poised to improve administrative processes, policy implementation, and service delivery to citizens. The predictive algorithms could allocate resources in public health, transportation, and education. Machine learning systems can identify corrupt, fraudulent, and wasteful spending by governments. Automated decision-making can minimize bureaucracy and ensure uniformity in service provision over geographical areas. By using NLP, governments can process public comments on a much larger scale and gain knowledge about the concerns of citizens and the policy priorities that matter to them more quickly than by relying on traditional consultation methods. If these are used in an open and fair way, they have the potential to enhance democratic governance by improving the efficiency, responsiveness, and citizen-centeredness of institutions. This is not merely about technology; it is about governance, accountability, and citizen engagement. These are the promises of AI to democracy. The interface of artificial intelligence and electoral politics, the subject of this chapter, is one of the most important changes in democratic politics since the introduction of broadcast television.

The 2024 U.S. presidential election was a wholly technological affair, as Large Language Models (LLMs), generative image and audio creation tools, and autonomous content distribution platforms have become more widely available than ever before and are accessible to individual actors, loosely connected networks, or state-aligned

---

[1] Mentxaka, Oier, Natalia, Díaz-Rodríguez, Mark, Coeckelbergh, Marcos, López de Prado, Emilia, Gómez, David, Fernández Llorca, Enrique, Herrera-Viedma, and Francisco, Herrera. 2026. "Aligning Trustworthy AI with Democracy: A Dual Taxonomy of Opportunities and Risks." arXiv. https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2505.13565

influence operations. Whereas earlier periods of political communication necessitated human labour to create, translate, customize, and deliver persuasive messages, generative AI reduces these expenses to near zero, enabling the creation of customized political messages at a scale and rate never before witnessed. The generative turn is not the first time that computational propaganda has been able to create consensus and challenge democratic processes, as[2] Woolley and Howard (2019) point out, the emergence of large language models extends these capabilities by orders of magnitude and introduces a new threat to democratic deliberation that requires new theoretical frameworks. The circumstances in which persuasion tips into manipulation and rhetoric into demagogy have long been debated by scholars of political communication. Aristotle through Hannah Arendt have all acknowledged that the kind and communal quality of the epistemic space in which political discourse occurs is what makes for the health of democracy. Where that environment is systematically distorted, where citizens do not share the same factual worlds, where power is manufactured instead of earned, and where emotive excitement takes the place of reflective judgment, democracy is formally sound but substantively empty. Algorithmic personalization gives each of us a different informational world, systematically undermining the common information base that underlies democratic life[3]. All of these pressures are worsened by the emergence of generative AI in electoral politics, and new vectors of epistemic harm are added to the literature on deepfakes[4] and affective polarization. The 2024 election cycle, which saw AI-generated audio deepfakes of presidential candidates go viral, synthetic images of electoral violence spread on major platforms, and politically motivated AI-generated policy scripts used in micro-targeted advertising campaigns, provides a rich and timely empirical field for examining these dynamics.

While AI offers potential benefits for governance, there are also many challenges and risks that need to be addressed when assessing its impact on good governance.

---

[2] Woolley, Samuel C., and Philip N., Howard. 2018. Computational Propaganda: Political Parties, Politicians, and Political Manipulation on Social Media. *Oxford Studies in Digital Politics*: Online Edn, Oxford Academic, New York. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190931407.001.0001

[3] Pariser, Eli. 2011. *The Filter Bubble: What the Internet Is Hiding from You*. New York: Penguin Press.

[4] Chesney, Robert, and Danielle K., Citron. 2019. "Deep Fakes: A Looming Challenge for Privacy, Democracy, and National Security." *California Law Review*, 107(6): 1753-1819. https://scholarship.law.bu.edu/faculty_scholarship/640/