



AI in Governance, Elections, and Public Policy

Module: Concepts and Technologies of AI

Name : Shreeya Parajuli

Student ID: 2508853

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Abstract

The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in government institutions and other processes involving elections is becoming more common, and it is influencing the decision-making process and the process of political opinion formation by citizens. Although AI may enhance efficiency and evidence-based decision-making, its potential misuse may be a severe threat to democracies. In this paper, the author will discuss ethical issues associated with AI in governance, such as political deepfakes, automated decision-making, and diminished trust among people. It contends that the absence of fairness, transparency, and accountability may compromise democratic principles and make the population less observant. The paper reviews the current governance initiatives in the paper and suggests an ethical AI paradigm founded on fairness, transparency, human oversight, sustainability, and accountability to defend the idea of democratic values and the rights of citizens.

Keywords: Ethical AI, Governance, Deepfakes, Algorithmic Bias, Public Policy, Democracy

Introduction

The presence of Artificial Intelligence has become increasingly common in government operations, particularly in elections and public decision-making. AI systems are now widely used in public departments and law enforcement to analyze policies, determine eligibility for welfare services, forecast crime trends, and monitor electoral processes. These technologies are often presented as tools that can improve accuracy, efficiency, and fairness in governance. Supporters argue that AI reduces human error, speeds up administrative procedures, and promotes consistency in decision-making.

Despite these advantages, the growing integration of AI into political and social systems has raised significant ethical concerns. As AI systems increasingly influence decisions that directly affect citizens' lives, important questions arise regarding accountability, transparency, and democratic control. In democratic societies, governments are expected to operate in ways that are open, understandable, and responsive to the public. Poorly managed AI systems risk undermining these principles by shifting decision-making power away from elected officials and citizens and placing it in opaque technological systems.

Several major ethical challenges are associated with the use of AI in governance, including algorithmic bias, lack of transparency, privacy violations, and the spread of misinformation through AI-generated content. These issues highlight a growing tension between technological efficiency and the core values of democracy. This paper explores these ethical concerns in detail, with particular attention to political deepfakes, algorithmic governance, and public trust. It also examines existing policy initiatives and proposes a general ethical framework to guide the responsible use of Artificial Intelligence in government and public institutions.

Thematic Review: Ethical Challenges and Ongoing Debates

Deepfakes and Political Misinformation.

Another ethical issue concerning AI in governance that is one of the most severe is the emergence of deepfakes and misinformation that is produced by AI. Deepfakes are fake videos, audio recordings, or pictures that have been developed with AI technologies, and they look real. They will be able to manipulate reputations, influence political discussion, and disseminate false information in elections.

Deepfakes are a direct challenge to democracy methods since the citizens cannot easily differentiate between real and fake information. People can still remember and believe the message even in the case of false information that is later corrected. Political deepfakes are particularly detrimental as they destroy confidence in media, political forces, and the democracy. When the citizens lack trust in the sources of information, chances are less that they will engage effectively in political activities.

Fratricidal dangers of Algorithms Governance.

The other giant ethical issue is that of algorithmic governance, meaning the application of AI systems to aid or automatize administrative decision making. This incorporates such decisions as the eligibility of welfare programs, policy implementation, and provision of service to the populace. Despite the fact that it is being said that these kinds of systems are objective and efficient, they are quite problematic concerning bias, transparency and accountability.

The problem of algorithmic bias is still a major threat to governance. Historical data is used to train AI systems and in most cases, this data captures the existing inequalities and unjust practices. In cases where these data are applied without a proper supervision, AI can be used to replicate and intensify discrimination. This may lead to the disadvantaged groups of people being denied necessary services. These consequences are especially disturbing in the governmental setting where equality and fairness are the key values.

The other problem of algorithmic governance is transparency. Numerous artificial intelligence systems are black boxes, which do not provide any explanation of the way a decision was created. This unaccountability makes it hard to be able to explain or debate decisions that impact people's lives. Democracy should have open decision-making that is subject to common scrutiny.

Democracy and Public Trust Threats.

Artificial Intelligence in governance poses serious threats to democracy and trust of people. The absence of transparency and accountability in AI systems may change the decision-making authority to the technical professionals at the expense of citizens and elected officials. This change weakens democracy and diminishes the control of citizens on the state organization.

The combination of automated decision-making systems and political misinformation decreases the level of public trust. Discriminatory or intrusive AI systems decrease confidence in the

technology and government agencies. It undermines civic engagement and the validity of democratic systems.

Policies of Secure and Transparent Civic AI.

To handle the problem of ethical issues in civic AI, it is necessary to have strong governance structures and policy interventions. The role of protecting human rights, transparency, and accountability in the utilization of AI technologies are highlighted by such international organizations as UNESCO and OECD. The AI Act of the European Union is a profound effort to regulate AI in the most risky areas, the governmental decision-making and elections.

Policies are however not enough. Good AI governance also involves independent control, transparency tools and reporting mechanisms. Institutions must be held responsible for the effects of AI usage.

Suggested Generic Ethical AI Framework to Governance.

There must exist a generalized ethical code that will govern the responsible application of Artificial Intelligence in government. To begin with, AI systems must be used to attain fairness and minimize inequality as opposed to supporting it. Second, it is important to be open so that the decisions made by AI can be perceived, analyzed and questioned by society. Third, human control has to be provided continuously to guarantee ethical judgment and democratic control.

Lastly, accountability is essential such that institutions are liable to AI outcomes and can be held responsible to the damage inflicted by AI technologies.

Discussion / Personal Reflection.

Not only do systems in Artificial Intelligence concern how ethics are implemented, but also the impact of the system on society and democracy. Although AI can enhance the efficiency of the government and the quality of decisions, it can be abused, spreading false information, breeding inequality, and undermining trust. Deepfakes and automated decision-making are a severe jeopardy to the elections and policy formulation, especially in cases where governance systems are not adjusted to the technological change.

This analysis helped me to understand that efficiency can never be given priority over transparency, fairness, and human control. Ethical principles are also safeguards that make AI enhance democracy and not destroy it. The AI systems must serve as aids to engaging the population and holding them accountable and not substitute human judgment in important political decisions. AI governance is thus necessary to safeguard the rights of citizens and democratic values.

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