

Is AI Threatening Democracy?

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1. Introduction

Artificial intelligence has developed rapidly in recent years. It can help people write papers, create PowerPoints, even make videos. These abilities can increase people's productivity and improve productivity.

AI has also been used in some election-related activities. During the *2024 US presidential election* and the *2025 German federal election*, growing evidence showed that AI-generated content was used to spread fake news and disrupt political debate by creating some false evidence¹. These incidents have raised concerns about the impact of AI on democratic elections and public trust².

This article examines how AI-generated misinformation affected the election and misled the voters. In the end, this article will state the author's opinion that AI misinformation has become a significant threat to democratic elections. However, its influence can be reduced through stronger supervision and improved media literacy.

2. AI and Democratic Elections

These technologies have made political communication faster, cheaper, and more persuasive.

One important psychological concept related to AI-generated content is the *availability heuristic*. According to psychologists Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman, people tend to judge the importance or likelihood of an event based on how easily examples come to mind³.

When AI repeatedly generates and distributes similar political messages, images, or videos across multiple social media platforms, voters are more likely to remember this

¹ [German Elections Misinformation Tracking Center - NewsGuard](#)

² [Republicans, Democrats now equally concerned about AI in daily life, but views on regulation differ | Pew Research Center](#)

³ [Ease of retrieval as information: another look at the availability heuristic](#)

information and may mistakenly regard it as true, even when it is false or misleading.

This mechanism is particularly influential in political communication. To be more specific, AI creates a huge amount of political content within a very short period of time. This content will be recommended repeatedly through social media algorithms. It can increase users' familiarity with the content, and familiarity often leads people to perceive information as more credible. As a result, repeated AI-generated misinformation can influence public opinion before it is verified or corrected. As a result, AI-generated misinformation can be used in election campaigns to promote candidates, attack political opponents, or manipulate public opinion.

For these reasons, AI has played an increasingly influential role in political elections. This has enabled political actors to gain strategic advantages in the election. These developments became particularly evident during the 2024 U.S. presidential election and the 2025 German federal election, which are discussed in the following sections.

3. AI Misinformation in the 2024 U.S. Election

In 2024, AI-generated content was used extensively in the election. It can produce huge amounts of misinformation such as pictures, audio, videos, and even political narratives, more quickly, easily, and cheaply. This content can be precisely targeted to specific audiences, amplifying opposing sentiments. The defensive mechanisms used for debunking rumors and fact-checking are continuously weakening, whereas the tools for producing and disseminating false information are constantly evolving and becoming increasingly powerful. Even so, there is hardly any evidence indicating that AI-generated misinformation has directly altered the voting choices of a large number of voters. AI did not determine the election result, but it demonstrated how easily artificial intelligence could be used to manipulate the political information environment.⁴

On January 22, 2024, many residents in New Hampshire received calls that used artificial intelligence to copy President Joe Biden's voice and tried to stop voters in the state from going to the polls during Tuesday's primary⁵. This is very dangerous because it influences voters' behavior through a realistic AI-generated voice from a trusted political figure. If AI can imitate familiar politicians, it is hard for normal people to distinguish between real information and fake messages. That is more deceptive than plain text fake news. To be more specific, when false AI-generated

⁴ [Misinformation may get worse in 2024 election as safeguards erode | AP News](#)

⁵ [Fake Biden robocall being investigated in New Hampshire | AP News](#)

messages discourage citizens from voting, AI misinformation can interfere directly with political participation. That would endanger the principle of democracy which means citizens' ability to participate freely in elections⁶. AI misinformation is therefore not only an information problem, but also a potential threat to political participation.

There are also lots of AI-generated images and videos in the 2024 election. One notable example is the circulation of an AI-generated image showing former President Donald Trump standing in the eye of Hurricane Helene⁷. While visually striking, this image is entirely fabricated, potentially misleading voters about Trump's actions during natural disasters.



AI-generated photo of Donald Trump wading through hurricane water

Even though this kind of information was exaggerated, some citizens might still believe it without doing any research to verify the sources. It might make voters disbelieve certain specific events, but it could also lead to negative impressions, stereotypes, emotional reactions, and distrust towards the candidate. AI-generated political content does not necessarily need to convince voters that every image is real. Repeated exposure may still influence how voters remember and evaluate political candidates.

Granted, there is no evidence showing that AI directly affected the election result. It still posed hidden dangers to the political environment. More and more election teams could use these methods and reduce public trust in political information. It also contributes to a political and media phenomenon called *liar's dividend*⁸, which means

⁶ [The Democracy Sourcebook - Google Books](#)

⁷ [AI-Generated Images are Warping the 2024 US Election](#)

⁸ [OSF | The Liar's Dividend: Can Politicians Claim Misinformation to Evade Accountability?](#)

politicians would have more incentive to deny facts. Once everyone knows that AI can create deepfakes, politicians might even claim that real evidence was produced by AI⁹. AI-generated technology is capable not merely of making false content seem authentic, but also of discrediting genuine information as fake. The U.S. election demonstrates that AI does not need to directly determine an electoral outcome to create risks for democracy. Similar concerns also appeared during the 2025 German federal election.

4. Case Study: 2025 German Federal Election

This also happened in the 2025 German election. According to research during the election, AI-based Voting Advice Applications were not neutral on some topics¹⁰. Researchers also found that the vulnerabilities in AI tools are very obvious. With just a simple, deliberately designed question script, AI can be induced to make up nonsense and fabricate facts.

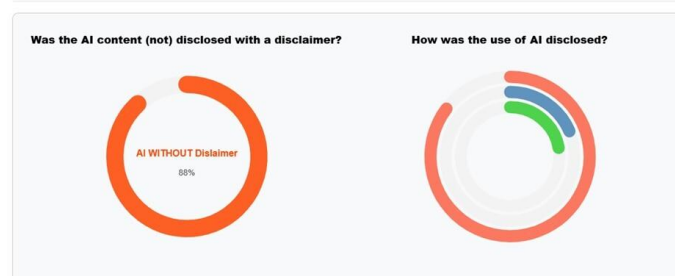
Unlike in the United States, AI-generated political content was relatively uncommon during the 2025 German federal election¹¹. However, these AI-generated posts often depict ordinary citizens. That could gain trust more easily because people might believe that these are real opinions from members of the public.

Moreover, 86% of these posts were not properly labeled.¹² This suggests that the main concern in Germany was

not the quantity of AI-generated political content, but the lack of transparency surrounding its use. As a result, voters may have difficulty identifying whether political content is authentic or AI-generated.

When such unlabeled content is repeatedly recommended by social media algorithms, it may further contribute to an

AI Transparency



Disclosure of AI content through party-added disclaimers or platform labels is crucial for transparency. This visualization shows how often AI-generated content was published with/without disclosures and whether the label was applied by the party or Meta.

The article states 86% in the text, while the accompanying graphic reports 88%; this paper follows the figure reported in the written findings.

⁹ [Deepfakes, Elections, and Shrinking the Liar's Dividend | Brennan Center for Justice](#)

¹⁰ [\[2502.15568\] A Cautionary Tale About "Neutrally" Informative AI Tools Ahead of the 2025 Federal Elections in Germany](#)

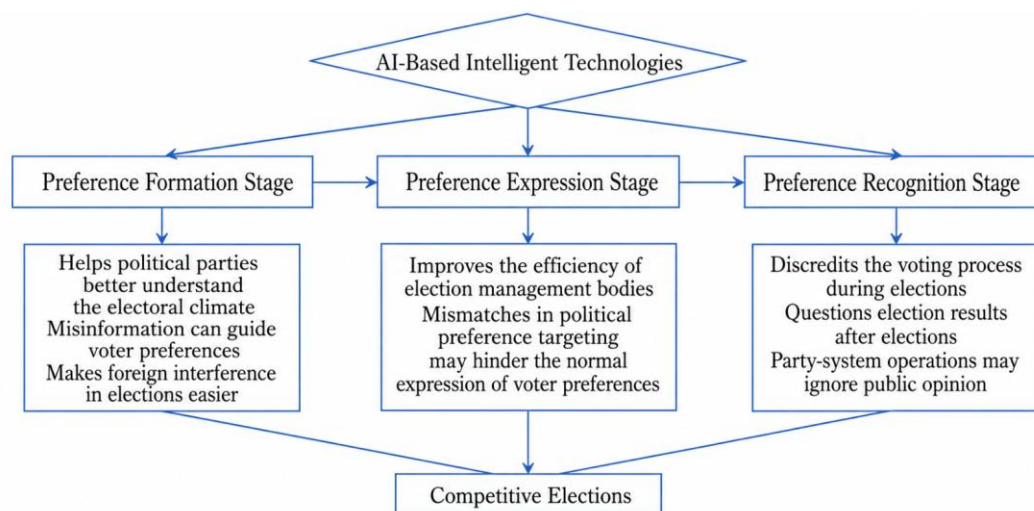
¹¹ [AI transparency in political campaigns: The CampAlign Tracker for the 2025 German Election | AlgoSoc](#)

¹² [AI transparency in political campaigns: The CampAlign Tracker for the 2025 German Election | AlgoSoc](#)

echo chamber effect¹³, where users are repeatedly exposed to similar political views while opposing perspectives become less visible. AI-assisted information manipulation may also amplify existing social divisions within Germany by repeatedly exposing targeted audiences to particular political narratives. This can reinforce existing beliefs, increase political polarization, and potentially influence voters' perceptions and political decisions¹⁴.

5. How AI Threatens Democracy

AI threatens democracy in three ways.



Note: The original figure was in Chinese. It was translated into English with the assistance of ChatGPT, with minor wording adjustments made to improve clarity while preserving the original meaning and structure.

First, it makes reliable information harder to identify. In the study, only 61% of the 260 participants could tell which pictures were AI-generated¹⁵. When voters cannot distinguish authentic information from AI-generated content, they may be more likely to misunderstand political information and make decisions based on false or misleading content. This can weaken informed decision-making in democratic elections.

Second, AI can generate huge amounts of information in a short time. Due to the rise of the short-video industry, combined with big-data recommendation algorithms that

¹³ [ECHO CHAMBERS AND EPISTEMIC BUBBLES | Episteme | Cambridge Core](#)

¹⁴ [Foreign Information Manipulation in the 2025 German Federal Election - Alliance4Europe](#)

¹⁵ [Seeing is No Longer Believing: A Survey on the State of Deepfakes, AI-Generated Humans, and Other Nonveridical Media | Advances in Computer Graphics](#)

push content to users who like similar material, it is extremely easy to reinforce echo chambers and polarization. When users see countless videos that align with their own views in a short period of time, this may reinforce their original opinions, causing them to be exposed to fewer and fewer viewpoints, and potentially influencing voters' political judgments.

Lastly, people will start to lose trust in elections and institutions. One factor contributing to this loss of trust is deepfakes. When media and news outlets, which were major sources of information in the past, lose their credibility, people may also lose trust in their government. Although this decline cannot be attributed solely to AI, the data show that trust in German media has dropped from 47% to 46%, and government trust has dropped by 5 percentage points to 42%¹⁶, reflecting broader concerns about public trust.

6. Responses and Limitations

Even though we cannot ignore that AI has made democratic elections lose credibility and has confused voters, there is still no clear evidence proving that AI can directly change election results. From my point of view, if we can take action immediately, we can reduce the risks brought by AI.

Firstly, governments should pass rigorous laws to prevent AI-generated content from being published without clear labels. When everyone can identify AI-generated content, the panic caused by unreliable information could be reduced gradually.

In addition, technology companies should take the initiative to develop stronger platform supervision tools which can more easily identify AI-generated content or content that incites conflict, making the internet environment clearer and more trustworthy.

Finally, citizens should also learn to critically evaluate AI-generated political content. If a post appears provocative, divisive, or designed to create fear and anxiety, voters should verify its source, compare it with other reliable information, and avoid sharing it before confirming its authenticity.

7. Conclusion

Overall, I think that AI poses a threat to democracy but it is not necessarily going to directly determine election results. The cases of the United States and Germany show

¹⁶ 吴梦徽: [AI 深度介入德国大选, 算法风暴考验民主韧性](#) (一财)

that AI may make reliable information harder to identify, increase polarization and reduce transparency. We should not completely reject the use of AI in elections. If governments could increase regulation and the public could develop the skills needed to avoid trusting deepfakes and false information, AI could be used more safely in future elections.