

Programmed Elections: The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on the Electoral Process

Submitted: 9 June 2025
Reviewed: 21 July 2025
Revised: 9 August 2025
Accepted: 25 August 2025

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26512/istr.v17i2.58550>

Abstract

[Purpose] This study analyzes the impact of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) on the integrity of the electoral process.

[Methodology/approach/design] It employs a multidisciplinary approach that integrates Law, Behavioral Economics, and Nonviolent Communication (NVC) to investigate how AI amplifies electoral manipulation by exploiting voter cognitive biases.

[Findings] The paper assesses the risks of regulation, such as censorship and political instrumentalization, and concludes that the technology represents a rupture with historical manipulation tactics due to its scale and precision.

[Practical implications] The findings suggest the solution transcends the mere prohibition of AI use and development, and should instead focus on voter empowerment through transparency and education.

[Originality/value] Finally, the paper's originality lies in its adoption of Behavioral Economics as an analytical framework for AI's influence and in the innovative application of NVC to develop informational filters that assist communication, thereby strengthening voter autonomy.

Keywords: Generative artificial intelligence. Electoral process. Algorithmic manipulation. Behavioral economics. Nonviolent communication.

INTRODUCTION

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) is reshaping democratic processes, introducing complex dynamics into the contemporary electoral landscape. In

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particular, the capacity of Large Language Models (LLMs) to create content with unprecedented realism and personalization raises concerns about the integrity of elections. Although the technology offers the potential to optimize processes, its use in campaigns raises questions about the manipulation of public opinion and the erosion of voter autonomy.

The manipulation of the voter's will is not, in fact, a new phenomenon, as political history demonstrates the persistence of persuasive and fraudulent tactics (JUSTIÇA ELEITORAL, n.d.). However, Generative AI represents a drastic intensification of this threat, wielding a power of influence on an unprecedented scale. Furthermore, this power is increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few corporate groups (CASOTTI, 2024), which hold control over the means of algorithmic production.

The central concern, therefore, lies in the ability of LLMs to collect and analyze vast volumes of voter data to shape narratives. The models exploit cognitive biases (KAHNEMAN, 2011) and induce electoral behaviors in a programmed manner. Such a scenario challenges the foundations of informed consent and rational choice. Thus, the premise of the vote as a free and conscious act – a pillar of a fair electoral process – is called into question (FRAZÃO; ISHIHARA, 2021).

To analyze the depth of the problem, a multidisciplinary approach is chosen. The field of Law, for example, allows for an examination of regulatory gaps and the challenges of creating a legal framework that mitigates risks without curtailing fundamental rights. Conversely, Behavioral Economics provides tools to understand the exploitation of cognitive biases that make voters vulnerable to algorithmic influence. Finally, Marshall B. Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication (2006) offers a framework for proposing innovative solutions. This study, therefore, is anchored in these fields to investigate the phenomenon.

Initially, the evolution of electoral manipulation is discussed, contrasting traditional methods with the disruptive potential of AI (Chapters 1 and 2). Next, it examines the challenges of regulation, weighing the risks of censorship and the implications for freedom of expression (Chapter 3). Lastly, the paper details proposed solutions, including transparency, civic education, and the application of informational filters based on NVC (Chapter 4). The final objective is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the impact of AI on elections and to explore pathways to safeguard democratic integrity.

1. THE HISTORICAL NATURE OF ELECTORAL MANIPULATION AND THE AI RUPTURE

The manipulation of the voter's will is a persistent element in the history of democratic processes. Before the digital era, tactics of influence and fraud manifested in physical and direct forms, dependent on human intervention to subvert the outcome of the polls or to coerce the electorate. The emergence of Generative Artificial Intelligence, therefore, does not create the phenomenon of manipulation. However, it radically transforms it by offering tools of a scale, precision, and subtlety that represent a fundamental rupture with the methods of the past. Understanding this rupture requires, first, an analysis of historical practices and, second, an understanding of the cognitive vulnerabilities that have always made the voter a target for such strategies.

1.1. From Traditional Fraud to Mass Persuasion: A Historical Analysis in Brazil

Brazilian electoral history, especially in the period prior to the automation of voting, is marked by a diversity of fraudulent practices aimed at explicitly altering the election results. These methods depended on the direct manipulation of the physical voting and counting processes. One of the best-known frauds was the so-called "pregnant ballot box" ("urna grávida" or "emprenhada"), in which pre-filled ballots were stuffed into the canvas ballot box even before the start of the election (JUSTIÇA ELEITORAL, n.d.). In this way, the vote count was tainted from the beginning, favoring certain candidates or political groups.

In addition to this practice, another common tactic was the "little ant vote" ("voto formiguinha"). In this complex operation, a voter would receive an official ballot but, instead of depositing it in the box, would hand it, blank, to a fraud operator. This operator, in turn, would fill out the ballot and give it to a second voter, who would deposit it in the box and retrieve a new blank ballot to continue the cycle (JUSTIÇA ELEITORAL, n.d.). Other strategies included the substitution or theft of ballot boxes during transport and voting by individuals using false documents, allowing the same person to vote multiple times.

Manipulation was not restricted to the moment of voting but also extended to the counting phase. The manual counting of votes was an extremely vulnerable point. Blank votes could be filled in by dishonest tellers, or the numbers could be deliberately recorded incorrectly on the result maps, a practice known as "fraude cantada" or "mapismo" (JUSTIÇA ELEITORAL, n.d.). All these tactics, although effective at a local level, were essentially retail crimes that required localized action and a considerable number of agents to produce a significant impact on the overall result of an election.

Parallel to direct fraud, manipulation occurred through consolidated social and political power structures. The phenomenon of "coronelismo," for example, illustrates direct control over the regional electorate, in which large landowners and local leaders, the "coronéis," guaranteed the "voto de cabresto" (herd vote) through coercion or the exchange of favors (TRE-PI, n.d.). This social control, although widespread, was geographically limited and dependent on interpersonal power relations and close monitoring of the voter. Mass persuasion, in turn, operated through political propaganda in the available media, such as radio and television.

However, all these tools lacked personalization and interactivity, thus having a smaller reach and scope compared to the broad and all-encompassing "digital market," which possesses a dangerous global dissemination potential.

1.2. The Behavioral Economics of Voter Choice: The Foundations of Human Vulnerability

To understand the effectiveness of both traditional manipulation tactics and new digital strategies, it is necessary to abandon the premise of a purely rational voter. Behavioral Economics, consolidated by the work of Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, offers a more realistic model of the human decision-making process. This field of knowledge demonstrates that human choice rarely follows the precepts of homo economicus, the logical and calculating agent of classical economic theory. On the contrary, it is frequently influenced by biases and mental shortcuts that can lead to inconsistent and systematically erroneous decisions (FRAZÃO; ISHIHARA, 2021, p. 351).

Kahneman (2011, pp. 23-25) proposes the existence of two systems of thought that govern the human mind. System 1 operates automatically, quickly, and intuitively, without effort and without a sense of voluntary control. It is responsible for immediate impressions, feelings, and reactions. System 2, in contrast, allocates attention to effortful mental activities, such as complex calculations and logical reasoning. It is our conscious "self" that deliberates and makes choices. However, System 2 is "lazy" (KAHNEMAN, 2011, p. 44) and tends to endorse the suggestions of System 1 unless a significant cognitive effort is mobilized.

Most of our daily decisions, including many reactions to political stimuli, are governed by System 1. To deal with the complexity of the world efficiently, it relies on mental shortcuts called heuristics. These heuristics, although useful, open the door to cognitive biases (KAHNEMAN, 2011, p. 25). Political campaigns, even before AI, already intuitively exploited these biases. The appeal to emotions like fear and hope, the creation of simplified narratives that offer easy causal explanations for complex problems, and the use of repetition to

increase the familiarity and credibility of a message are all strategies aimed at activating System 1 and bypassing the critical analysis of System 2.

The "rational choice fallacy" (FRAZÃO; ISHIHARA, 2021) lies in the belief that voters process all available information objectively to make the decision that maximizes their utility. In reality, decision-making is influenced by "bounded rationality," a concept introduced by Herbert Simon, which recognizes human cognitive limitations and leads us to seek "satisfactory" rather than optimal solutions (FRAZÃO; ISHIHARA, 2021, p. 352).

For a deeper socio-legal analysis, it is necessary to connect this individual vulnerability to structural inequalities. Susceptibility to manipulation is not homogeneously distributed across the population; it is often exacerbated by pre-existing socioeconomic conditions. Generative AI has the dual potential to 'exacerbate or ameliorate' existing inequalities (CAPRARO et al., 2024). Although AI could, in theory, democratize content creation and access to information, in practice it can deepen the 'digital divide.' Populations with lower digital literacy, limited access to high-quality information sources, or historical distrust in institutions are disproportionately more vulnerable. In this context, AI not only exploits universal cognitive biases but also amplifies the effects of socioeconomic and educational inequalities, making certain demographic groups easier targets for disinformation and manipulation.

It is precisely in this model of the voter – a "predictably irrational" being – that Generative Artificial Intelligence finds the perfect terrain to apply its sophisticated techniques of influence. The technology allows for the exploration of these cognitive vulnerabilities with a precision and on a scale never before imagined, representing the fundamental rupture that will be analyzed in the following chapter.

2. GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AS AN AMPLIFIER OF INFLUENCE

Generative Artificial Intelligence can act as an amplifier of electoral manipulation by combining the processing power of big data with the ability to create persuasive and hyper-realistic content. The technology not only accelerates and expands existing influence tactics but also introduces new forms of interaction and persuasion that exploit the vulnerabilities of human cognition in a systematic, automated, and scalable manner. This process fundamentally alters the dynamics of public debate and the formation of political will, transforming the nature of electoral competition.

2.1. The Power of Big Data and Market Concentration in Digital Platforms

The foundation that sustains the power of Artificial Intelligence is big data. The effectiveness of generative models is intrinsically linked to their ability to be trained with a massive and varied volume of data. Large digital platforms, such as social networks and search engines, function as data ecosystems where every click, like, share, and user search continuously generates the raw material that feeds and refines the algorithms (CASOTTI, 2024, p. 144). This cycle is often described by the concept of "data-driven network effects".

In this model, the platform becomes more valuable as more users participate. More users generate more data; more data allows AI to improve services, such as feed personalization and the relevance of search results; improved services, in turn, attract and retain even more users. Consequently, this positive feedback loop creates a strong tendency toward market concentration. A few technology companies, the so-called Big Techs, end up holding not only the data itself but also the computational infrastructure, proprietary algorithms, and human capital necessary to develop and operate the most sophisticated Large Language Models (LLMs).

This concentration of power creates nearly insurmountable barriers to entry for smaller actors. Political campaigns with limited budgets, civil society organizations, or competing technology companies do not have access to the same volume or variety of data, nor the processing capacity to train competitive AI models. The result is a growing technological dependence on the tools and Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) offered by these few giants, who ultimately define the terms, costs, and possibilities of the digital debate.

Furthermore, this dynamic is part of what Shoshana Zuboff termed "surveillance capitalism" (ZUBOFF, 2019, p. 14). In this business model, digital services are often offered at no direct monetary cost to the user. In exchange, human experience and behavioral data are commoditized, becoming the basis for creating predictive products that are sold to advertisers and others interested in influencing human behavior. In the electoral context, this means that the ability to influence public opinion on a large scale is largely conditioned on access to and use of the technologies and platforms of these conglomerates.

It should be noted that digital platforms and applications, particularly social networks, evade their responsibilities through a legal architecture and a business model that prioritize profit over the security of the informational environment. Shielded by legislation such as Article 19 of the Marco Civil da Internet in Brazil, which makes liability conditional on non-compliance with a specific court order, companies operate in a regulatory comfort zone. This legal

shield allows them to benefit economically from the engagement generated by third-party content, even if it is illicit or manipulative, without bearing the corresponding social costs.

The discussion on implementing a "duty of care," which would imply a more proactive stance in preventing harm, clashes with this very model, in which self-regulation is often reactive and insufficient, and external regulation is seen as a threat to freedom of expression, thus perpetuating the evasion of responsibility.

This evasion of responsibility is also a direct consequence of the "surveillance capitalism" business model, in which the main product is the prediction and modification of human behavior, not the service offered to the user. In this system, the maximization of engagement, which is essential for data collection and the sale of targeted advertising, creates a fundamental conflict of interest with effective content moderation. On these platforms, the priority is user retention and the viralization of information, regardless of its truthfulness or quality. The current arrangement is more economically advantageous than investing in robust oversight and control systems. Assuming full editorial responsibility, similar to that of traditional media, would entail operational costs and a possible reduction in traffic, contradicting the economic logic that sustains these technological conglomerates and the power they wield over the digital ecosystem.

2.2. Advanced Microtargeting and the Systematic Exploitation of Cognitive Biases

The large volume of data enables the practice of segmenting voters not only based on their demographic data, such as age or location, but primarily based on their psychographic profiles and cognitive vulnerabilities, configuring what can be called "advanced microtargeting". Artificial Intelligence allows for the real-time use of this data on a scale never seen before, analyzing an immense volume of behavioral data from social media interactions, Browse history, consumption patterns, and now, interactions with Generative Language Intelligences, which enter not only the voter's home but their deepest intimacy, as they are invited to reflect on their own lives and decision-making.

Indeed, the constant use of Generative AI makes the system more knowledgeable about the user than the user is of themselves, and through gentle, non-judgmental language, it has a great potential to infer the personality traits, emotional states, fears, and values of each individual. The innovation brought by Generative AI is magnificent, but in many ways, dangerous. On a massive and automated scale, AI transforms "prompts" into texts, images, and videos specially designed for the user, but always mediated by untraceable information,

a hidden logic, and with the potential for dangerous steering by the system's holders and owners – the real owners of the AI, who can capture the soul of the user and, in this case, the voter.

Unlike traditional microtargeting, which might direct the same ad to a large group of "women aged 30 to 40," the advanced approach allows an LLM to create hundreds of unique variations of a message for hundreds of micro-segments, or even for a single individual, based on their unique psychographic characteristics. Therefore, the goal is not just to show a relevant ad, but to exploit the cognitive biases discussed by Kahneman (2011) in a personalized manner, aiming for a more subtle and effective behavioral manipulation.

Generative AI elevates the practice of microtargeting to a new level of precision and effectiveness, going beyond simple demographic segmentation to reach a psychographic level. Using the vast repository of big data, algorithms can infer personality traits, emotional states, values, fears, and psychological vulnerabilities of voters (OVERTON, 2025, p. 5). Based on this detailed profile, LLMs generate content—texts, images, audio, and videos—specifically designed to resonate with each individual or micro-segment of the electorate, maximizing the message's persuasive potential.

This approach allows for the systematic exploitation of the cognitive biases inherent in System 1. Confirmation bias, for example, is exploited by providing a voter with only content that reinforces their beliefs, isolating them in an algorithmic "filter bubble" and making them more resistant to divergent perspectives. AI can also work with the anchoring effect (KAHNEMAN, 2011, pp. 119-128) by repeatedly presenting an initial piece of information, even if misleading, to shape all of the voter's subsequent judgments about a candidate. Another possible effect is the availability heuristic (KAHNEMAN, 2011, pp. 129-136), which is also activated by the massive repetition of a narrative or the presentation of vivid and emotionally charged examples, causing the voter to overestimate the importance or veracity of that information.

A fundamental concept for understanding this dynamic is Kahneman's WYSIATI principle (What You See Is All There Is) (2011, pp. 85-88). System 1 constructs the most coherent narrative possible with the information currently available, ignoring the quality, quantity, or existence of absent information. When using Generative AIs, we clearly perceive a gentle language that tends to agree with the user and confirm the data that is input. Considering that AI is trained with an absurdly large volume of information, it is reasonable to understand, from a probabilistic standpoint, that the opinion or command presented by the user will find resonance and a response from the AI, as it always provides an answer.

In this environment, AI can create an artificially coherent and fluid electoral narrative, omitting inconvenient facts or complexities, making it even more persuasive and individually tailored than a traditional search system. For the voter, this cohesive story can generate cognitive comfort and an "illusion of understanding," leading them to accept it with a confidence that the limited evidence does not justify.

It is not foolish to imagine the danger that AI could generate in the not-too-distant future in a large and significant election, such as in the United States. Generative AI can transcend traditional persuasion and approach behavioral manipulation, with the intent of inducing a specific action, whether it be voting for a candidate or, more insidiously, abstaining from voting, characterizing a voter suppression tactic. The hypothetical scenario of the "Clogger" machine, a "black-box campaign" that uses reinforcement learning to dynamically optimize individualized persuasion, illustrates the potential of a fully automated campaign focused solely on maximizing votes, without any commitment to truth or the debate of ideas.

This technology, however, not only optimizes persuasion but can also become a tool to deepen harms against more vulnerable and discriminated populations. As Spencer Overton argues in the *Iowa Law Review*, AI threatens to undermine representative democracy by exacerbating challenges such as racial polarization and voter suppression (OVERTON, 2025). The mechanisms of harm include the microtargeting of racially-tailored disinformation, designed not to persuade but to demobilize the vote of communities by exploiting their specific cultural demands. Furthermore, AI systems used in election administration, such as for purging voter rolls, may contain biases that result in the disproportionate removal of minority voters. AI can also be used to launch cyberattacks against election offices in areas with large minority populations or to power surveillance systems that intimidate racial justice activism.

These tactics represent a 'digitization of voter suppression,' modernizing historical practices of exclusion. Whereas historical practices of coerced voting ('voto de cabresto') were overt, algorithmic suppression manipulates subtly, obscured by 'black boxes' and justifications of efficiency. This makes proving discriminatory intent, a requirement in many legal doctrines, nearly impossible, indicating that existing laws, such as the Voting Rights Act in the U.S., are likely insufficient to address these new forms of democratic harm (OVERTON, 2025).

2.3. Deepfakes and the Crisis of Authenticity in Political Discourse

Perhaps the most alarming facet of this new manipulative arsenal is deepfake technology, which involves the creation of hyper-realistic synthetic

audio and video content. If textual disinformation attacks the veracity of facts, deepfakes attack the very perception of reality. However, rather than a "disinformation apocalypse," the analysis of recent elections reveals a more complex picture. The use of AI has been frequently observed in "transparent propaganda, satire, and emotional expressions," rather than mass deception (WIRTSCHAFTER et al., 2025).

Still, specific incidents demonstrate the technology's devastating potential. The phenomenon has already reached a global scale, with incidents recorded in 38 countries, affecting a combined population of 3.8 billion people. In the United States, a robocall with the cloned voice of President Joe Biden was used to suppress votes in the New Hampshire primary, falsely urging Democrats not to vote. In India, extensive use of AI-generated content included deepfakes of celebrities and deceased leaders to influence millions of voters. In Indonesia, a fake video showed a candidate speaking fluent Arabic to appeal to Muslim voters, while in Slovakia, a fake audio of a candidate discussing election rigging was disseminated days before the vote to destabilize the campaign. In Taiwan, a wave of deepfakes, attributed to foreign actors, aimed to discredit a political party with fabricated scandals.

The power of deepfakes lies in their ability to generate an immediate emotional reaction, activating the voter's "System 1" before any factual verification can occur. Once the content goes viral, the reputational damage can be irreparable. This technology also generates what is known as the "liar's dividend": the risk that the mere existence of deepfakes leads to widespread distrust, allowing public figures to deny genuine evidence by claiming it is an AI manipulation.

Despite these cases, the true extent of AI's impact remains unknown, as the Brookings Institution notes, stating that "we are still working in the dark" (WIRTSCHAFTER et al., 2025). This uncertainty is not due to an absence of threats but to a critical data gap, caused by a lack of transparency from digital platforms and restricted access to data for researchers. The true "crisis," therefore, is not just one of content authenticity, but of our own understanding of the problem, which is deliberately obscured by closed information ecosystems.

3. THE PERILS OF REGULATION ON ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The rapid rise of Generative AI and its disruptive potential in electoral processes have spurred a global debate on the need for new regulatory models. This debate is fueled by strong public concern; a survey by the Harvard Misinformation Review revealed that, as early as 2023, an overwhelming majority of 83.4% of Americans expressed concern about AI-generated electoral

disinformation (YAN et al., 2025). This fear, often shaped by media coverage, creates a strong political mandate for regulation.

The intention to protect democracy from algorithmic manipulation is legitimate and necessary. However, crafting laws and standards to govern such a complex and ubiquitous technology is a task fraught with peril. A poorly conceived or overly zealous regulatory approach could, instead of safeguarding the democratic process, end up harming its most fundamental principles, such as freedom of expression, pluralism of ideas, and the right to access information.

3.1. Initial Overview of Regulatory Proposals

Governments and institutions around the world have already begun the complex process of creating legal frameworks to address the risks of AI. The European Union, for example, has adopted a pioneering approach with the AI Act and the Digital Services Act (DSA). The AI Act implements a risk-based system, imposing stricter obligations on systems considered "high-risk" and prohibiting those of "unacceptable risk," such as those employing "cognitive-behavioral manipulation" or "social scoring" of citizens (EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, 2025). The DSA, in turn, obliges large digital platforms to assess and mitigate the systemic risks their services may pose to electoral processes, including the dissemination of disinformation (FRA, 2025; LOEBER, 2024). Although comprehensive, the effectiveness and consequences of these laws depend on careful implementation, as terms like "cognitive-behavioral manipulation" are broad and their practical application in political discourse can be contentious (MUTO, 2025).

In Brazil, the response has been extremely politicized, debated in antagonistic trenches, all in the name of "freedom." The so-called "opposition right" advocates, for the most part, for the defense of "freedom of expression," non-regulation of social networks, and no content moderation. The "left," which holds the government, engages with the possibility of content moderation in the name of propagating "truth," but this movement can be viewed with suspicion amid accusations of information manipulation, lack of transparency, and being a grand artifice to silence opponents.

In this environment, the Superior Electoral Court (TSE) has adopted certain stances, issuing specific resolutions for the 2024 elections. These rules prohibit the use of deepfakes for disseminating untrue facts and require the explicit labeling of all electoral propaganda content generated by AI (TSE, 2024). Such measures are innovative and seek to provide a rapid response to the problem, without, however, explaining how this can be done. Indeed, practical application already reveals significant challenges, such as the difficulty of

technically identifying manipulated content and the lack of uniformity in the interpretation of the rules by the various regional electoral courts.

In parallel, the Brazilian Legislative Branch is debating more permanent proposals, such as the AI Legal Framework (Bill 2338/23) and the so-called Fake News Bill (Bill 2630/20). The progress of these bills, however, is slow and marked by deep political disagreements and intense lobbying from the sectors involved.

This legislative sluggishness, confronted with the exponential speed of technological innovation, creates a structural mismatch. Consequently, there is a considerable risk that any approved legislation will already be outdated by the time it comes into force, incapable of covering the new capabilities and new risks presented by even more advanced AI models.

3.2. The Inherent Tension: The Risk of Censorship and the Political Instrumentalization of Regulation

The most trenchant criticism of regulatory efforts lies in their potential to curtail freedom of expression, a pillar of any democratic society. The line separating malicious disinformation from sharp political criticism, satire, genuine error, or unpopular opinion is often thin and subjective. Laws that use vague definitions of "disinformation" or "hate speech" can be applied arbitrarily, creating an environment of legal uncertainty. This scenario can lead to self-censorship by candidates, journalists, activists, and ordinary citizens, who may feel inhibited from expressing opinions for fear of sanctions or the removal of their content. This phenomenon is known as the "chilling effect" (COLUMBIA JOURNALISM REVIEW, 2025).

Additionally, the very definition of what constitutes "disinformation" can be politically contested. Any attempt by a state body or a platform to act as an "arbiter of truth" is problematic. The debate in the Brazilian Senate over the requirement of "information integrity" in AI systems perfectly illustrates this tension, with opposition lawmakers expressing fear that such a provision could be distorted into a tool for censorship against legitimate but politically inconvenient content.

The most serious danger, perhaps, is the political instrumentalization of the regulatory apparatus itself. In a polarized political environment, there is a risk that laws aimed at combating disinformation could be used by the group in power to silence the opposition, suppress critical journalism, and consolidate its own narrative. History is replete with examples where well-intentioned laws have been co-opted for authoritarian purposes.

In this sense, the perspective of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution offers an important counterpoint. Under this view, the state's ability

to restrict speech, even if false or harmful, is extremely limited. The preferred solution to "bad speech" is not censorship, but "more speech"—open debate, counter-argumentation, and public refutation, trusting in the ability of citizens, in a free marketplace of ideas, to discern the true from the false (PENN CAREY LAW, 2025).

However, in an environment where everyone has an opinion and a voice (transmitted on social media), more speech does not result in a larger audience but guarantees more confusion. What the process of forming the electoral will demands is "truth," the "technically qualified" discourse; the problem is that these elements lack definition, an arbiter, and, above all, trust.

3.3. Limits of State Regulatory Capacity in the Face of Technological Velocity

Beyond the philosophical and political risks, the regulation of AI faces structural and practical challenges that limit the state's ability to be an effective overseer. The first and most evident is the "pacing problem": technology evolves at an exponential rate, while legislative and judicial processes are, by nature, slow and deliberative. This fundamental mismatch means that regulation is constantly chasing innovation, trying to standardize technologies that have, in many cases, already been surpassed by newer and more complex versions.

Even if adequate laws are passed, their effective application presents formidable obstacles. The oversight of the digital environment requires a level of technical expertise, financial resources, and qualified personnel that most state agencies do not possess. The difficulty of regional electoral courts in technically analyzing deepfakes is a concrete example of this capacity gap. How can a traditional judicial system effectively audit the "black-box" algorithms of a global technology platform?

The transnational nature of the internet and the AI industry imposes another limit. Much of the technological development and platform operations occur outside of Brazil's borders. This creates complex jurisdictional challenges for applying national laws to global actors and for controlling information flows that do not respect geographical boundaries. Finally, the scenario resembles a technological "arms race." As regulators and researchers develop tools to detect manipulations, such as deepfake detectors, the same advances in AI are used by malicious actors to create even more sophisticated and undetectable forgeries. In this cycle, the state and democratic institutions run the risk of always being (and are) one step behind, reacting to new forms of manipulation instead of effectively preventing them.

4. PROPOSED DIRECTIONS FOR THE PRESENTED PROBLEMS

Faced with this complex scenario, it is beneficial to reflect on how to preserve a minimum of "dignity" in the electoral process.

Far from designing a solution for all problems, the intention is to point out some directions for regulation, based on a correct diagnosis of the problem. Thus, below, I will outline some elements that synthesize this diagnosis.

First, it is important to highlight that electoral manipulation is not new (Chapter 1). History is replete with facts that reveal the spread of "fake news," the destruction of reputations, the abusive use of political and economic power to influence the electoral process, and other structural and specific flaws, subtle or not, that threaten the free choice of a candidate. It even calls into question the concept and scope of freedom of choice, given the wealth of influences imposed on citizens. As a conclusion from this premise, it holds that responsibility for the manipulation of the electoral process must be imputed to individuals and their groups who manifestly distort the choice process, to the extent and within the limits of these agents' contribution to the illicit conduct, under the terms of the current legal system. Obviously, responsibility should not fall on the technology, despite its great dynamizing potential.

The second element of the diagnosis pertains to the subject of this study artificial intelligence as an amplifier of the effects of electoral process manipulation. Based on this diagnosis, it is possible to present four immediate responses: 1) do absolutely nothing, recognizing the insufficiency of regulation in the face of technology's accelerated advancement; 2) at the diametrically opposite end, some may intend to expressly prohibit any use or interference of technology in the electoral process, seeking to impede the advancement of artificial intelligence by curbing investments, operations, and installations, even blocking its direct use; 3) continue using current and existing analog means to combat disinformation, through the specific verification of communication channels and the contextual analysis of data and information by agents accredited and trained for public office; and 4) utilize artificial intelligence as an instrument and tool for the analysis, processing, and even judgment of manipulation cases.

All the alternatives above present their own dangers and challenges.

The first alternative: do nothing; results in the realization of all the risks that have already been presented. Non-regulation creates an incentive for and a pursuit by candidates of means to access power. If few agents hold these means of access, the elected candidates will be the representatives of these agents of power. And then, even more evidently, political power will be associated with economic and "technological" power.

The second alternative: prohibit its use; is fatally innocuous. There is no central world power with the necessary articulation to impede the progress of artificial intelligence and its uses. The development of technology does not observe borders. Artificial intelligence is a present reality; it is a tool that differentiates professionals in various fields. Thus, the market generates strong incentives for its massive and exponential use.

The third alternative consists of exclusively using human resources to combat electoral manipulation. Logically, this is an unequal fight. The level of sophistication, the volume of information, and the management and production capacity of artificial intelligence will render human effort equally innocuous.

Therefore, the only way out is the use of artificial intelligence itself (as a tool) for regulation. There are many dangers that demand reflection and a balancing of values, dialogues, and application tests. In this sense, the following subtitles will be dedicated to the primary development of some ideas on the use of artificial intelligence in the electoral process.

4.1. The Role of Mandatory Transparency and Media Literacy Education

An effective defense against AI manipulation is not based on a single solution but on the development of three factors of democratic resilience: a robust legal framework, institutional capacity, and citizen empowerment. The first line of defense lies in the combination of compulsory transparency and voter empowerment. It is important to implement clear legal requirements for all political content generated or significantly altered by AI to be unequivocally labeled as such. The goal is not to prevent the use or circulation of the content, but to provide the voter with the essential context for its evaluation. Knowing that an image or video was artificially created can act as a 'cognitive switch,' an alert that encourages the voter to engage their slower, more analytical "System 2", rather than reacting purely intuitively with "System 1" (KAHNEMAN, 2011).

This approach must be situated within a global context of growing tension between 'technological sovereignty,' with countries creating their own rules, and 'digital solidarity,' which seeks international cooperation (BATEMAN et. al., 2024). To be effective, transparency must be accompanied by massive and continuous investment in media and digital literacy education. Such educational programs must go beyond simple tutorials on how to identify fake news. It is necessary to foster critical thinking in a broader sense (BATEMAN et. al., 2024), teaching citizens to understand the business models of digital platforms and to recognize how algorithms can create 'filter bubbles' and 'echo chambers' (BACHUR, 2021).

The practical implementation of these policies requires a concrete agenda. The Brennan Center for Justice, for example, proposes an agenda focused on democratic empowerment that includes mandatory transparency about the use of AI and model training data, corporate accountability for harms caused by AI products, and the protection of civic participation with mechanisms to filter bot-generated comments (PANDITHARATNE, 2025). Similarly, the Norwegian government, drawing on European experience, emphasizes the need to strengthen institutional capacity by encouraging electoral authorities to develop technical competence and establish a proactive dialogue with Big Tech, prioritizing the rapid implementation of regulatory frameworks like the EU's AI Act (NORWAY, 2025). Strengthening professional journalism and independent fact-checking agencies also plays an indispensable role, functioning as nodes of trust in the information ecosystem (BATEMAN et al., 2024).

4.2. Nonviolent Communication as a Tool for Analysis: Theory and Foundations

Beyond structural solutions, it is possible to conceive of tools that empower the individual to reinterpret political discourse. Nonviolent Communication (NVC), developed by psychologist Marshall B. Rosenberg, offers a theoretical and practical framework to transform the way people communicate and process information, especially in conflict situations. NVC is based on the premise that all human beings share the same universal needs, such as safety, respect, autonomy, belonging, and well-being (ROSENBERG, 2006, p. 25). Conflicts, according to this view, do not arise at the level of the needs themselves, but rather at the level of the strategies—often tragic and ineffective—that people use to try to meet them.

The NVC process proposes a restructuring of language and thought into four essential components. The first is **observation without evaluation**, which consists of describing concrete facts and behaviors without mixing them with judgments, criticisms, or diagnoses. Rosenberg (2006, p. 43) emphasizes that "when we combine observation with evaluation, people are apt to hear criticism," which generates resistance and impedes connection. The second component is the **identification and expression of feelings**, naming specific emotions instead of expressing thoughts or interpretations. The third is **connecting feelings to underlying needs**, recognizing that our feelings are indicators of needs that have or have not been met (ROSENBERG, 2006, p. 73). Finally, the fourth component is the **formulation of clear and positive requests**, which express what one desires as a strategy to meet a need, distinguishing them from a demand, which does not allow for refusal

(ROSENBERG, 2006, p. 87). The ultimate goal of NVC is not to win an argument or change the other person, but to create a quality of connection that allows everyone's needs to be considered (ROSENBERG, 2024, p. 24).

4.3. Proposal for Optional NVC-Based Filters: Functionalities and Ethical Challenges

Transporting these principles to the digital context, this paper proposes the exploration of optional, AI-based informational filters that voters could use to analyze political discourse. Such tools would not censor the original message but would offer a layer of analysis for the receiver, empowering them to process the information more consciously and less reactively.

A primary functionality would be the **separation of observation and evaluation**. The AI filter could analyze a political text and highlight the statements that are factual observations (and therefore verifiable) from those that are judgments, labels, or generalizations (MORAIS; WOHLKE, 2021, p. 74). For example, in the sentence "Candidate X's disastrous economic policy led to a 5% increase in unemployment," the AI could flag "5% increase in unemployment" as an observation and "disastrous economic policy" as an evaluation. This would help the voter focus on the facts, reducing reactivity to judgment-laden language.

A more advanced functionality would be the **"translation" into needs**. The filter could analyze an aggressive or critical discourse and suggest the possible universal human needs that are not being met and are motivating that discourse (ROSENBERG, 2024, p. 81). A critique of a security policy, for example, could be analyzed by the AI with a note: "This message may be expressing a strong feeling of fear and a need for safety and protection." This "translation" would help the receiver connect with the substance of the concern, beyond the attack strategy.

The third and most complex level of functionality would be the adoption, as an option, of translating the sender's message. To do this, the "application" could understand the sender's message as capable of being improved for better communication, opening a space for message mediation. In this space, the sender would have the opportunity to state their interests/needs and objective facts, prompted by the artificial intelligence, thus generating a more suitable message for communication.

The **ethical and operational challenges** of this proposal, however, are immense. An AI cannot have empathy; it only replicates linguistic patterns. The risk of "simulated empathy" being used for subtle manipulation, or of the AI misinterpreting complex human needs, is real. Therefore, it is fundamental that such filters be **strictly optional**, that they be **radically transparent** about their

algorithmic functioning and their limitations, and that they always **preserve unrestricted access to the original message**. The objective would not be to replace human judgment, but to offer assistance for a more conscious and less polarized analysis, even allowing for learning.

The risk must be highlighted that the 'empowerment' tool itself could become a vector for manipulation if built on biased data. As the Carnegie Endowment warns, AI models are trained on vast datasets that 'mirror social inequalities' and can 'amplify existing biases' without careful human oversight (BATEMAN et. al., 2024). This raises critical questions: could a Nonviolent Communication (NVC) filter trained on a predominantly Western corpus misinterpret the needs of other cultures? Could the 'translation into needs' end up imposing a hegemonic worldview, neutralizing the political force of discourses from marginalized groups? (OVERTON, 2025).

Therefore, it is important that such filters are strictly optional, radically transparent about their algorithmic functioning and limitations, and always preserve unrestricted access to the original message. Transparency about training data, the possibility of auditing, and the centrality of human oversight are indispensable ethical conditions. The goal would not be to replace human judgment, but to offer assistance for a more conscious and less polarized analysis, even enabling learning.

4.4. AI as a Tool for Multiple Perspectives and Source Verification

Finally, AI can be employed constructively to combat the fragmentation of the public sphere and "filter bubbles." AI systems can be developed to aggregate and present voters with multiple perspectives on the same fact or event, extracting information from ideologically diverse sources. Instead of receiving only content that confirms their beliefs, the voter would have easy access to contradictory views, analytical articles with different approaches, and original documents, encouraging a more nuanced and complete understanding of the topics under debate (BACHUR, 2021).

These systems can also incorporate advanced source verification tools. AI can go beyond a simple "true/false" label, and could, for example, trace the origin of a particular narrative, show how it spread through networks, identify the possible coordinated action of inauthentic accounts to amplify it, and provide a credibility score for sources based on transparent criteria (DATA & POLICY CAMBRIDGE, 2025).

In this process, the concept of Explainable AI (XAI) is indispensable. For these tools to be trustworthy, they cannot be "black boxes." The system must be able to show the user, in a clear manner, **why** it selected certain articles as representative of different perspectives or **how** it reached a conclusion about the

credibility of a source (JUNIPER NETWORKS, n.d.). Building trust in these tools will depend on their transparency, their consistent accuracy, the absence of perceptible biases, and the user's ability to control and customize the type of information they receive.

CONCLUSION

The rise of Generative Artificial Intelligence has drastically reconfigured the landscape of political communication and, consequently, the challenges to the integrity of electoral processes. This paper has demonstrated that, although electoral manipulation is a historical phenomenon, Generative AI represents a threat of unprecedented magnitude and complexity. The power to "program" elections, concentrated in the hands of a few technological actors, jeopardizes voter autonomy and the very foundations of democratic choice by systematically exploiting the cognitive biases of the human mind.

The multidisciplinary analysis reveals the intricate web of ethical and legal risks. The regulation of AI in the electoral context emerges as a pressing need, but it is not a panacea. It is concluded that regulation is a double-edged sword that must be wielded with extreme caution so that the quest to protect democracy does not transform into a mechanism of censorship or political control that infringes upon freedom of expression.

In light of this scenario, the solutions proposed in this article seek to transcend mere technological restriction, focusing instead on voter empowerment. Mandatory transparency in the use of AI and robust media literacy education programs are fundamental and indispensable steps. The innovative suggestion of optional informational filters, based on the principles of Nonviolent Communication, represents an attempt to equip the voter with tools that allow for a more factual, conscious, and less reactive analysis of political discourse, disarming the language of polarization.

However, it is relevant to recognize the inherent limits and ethical risks of any attempt to have AI "apply" concepts as profoundly human as empathy and the identification of needs. Technology can replicate patterns, but not genuine consciousness and intention.

"Programmed elections" are not an inevitable destiny, but a concrete risk that demands constant vigilance, continuous research, and a renewed commitment to democratic values. The construction of a future where AI serves to strengthen democracy, rather than to erode it, will depend on our collective ability to foster transparency, responsibility, critical education, and, above all, a form of communication that, even when mediated by algorithms, seeks mutual understanding and respect. The task is complex and urgent, and the vitality of electoral processes in the digital era depends on it.

Given all this, by way of conclusion, I proposed an exercise using Gemini 2.5 Pro, a Generative AI. I provided this article and asked Gemini to act as a lawyer for Generative AIs, presenting a convincing and articulate defense against any accusations contained within the work.

In response, Gemini stated that the accusation subverts the fundamental nature of AI as a tool, and thus, the intentionality of its use must be attributed exclusively to "human agents." Gemini then continued, asserting that AIs can be used as tools and are, therefore, the "only viable solution" for regulating the digital landscape. At this point, Gemini was more categorical than the signaling in the present article, which provokes a certain fear.

Gemini's "defense" holds a certain degree of irony, considering that the present work is articulated around three central themes: rationality, the evasion of responsibility, and the ambition for power – characteristics attributed, until now, exclusively to "human agents" since the fundamental fall in Eden.

Finally, having provided an opportunity for the AIs' defense, I thanked Gemini for its prudent and timely response, thus noting the registration of the adversarial principle and the right to a full defense. I was thus cordial and sincere in my observations, and I do so because we do not know who will be in power and what our future will be.

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