

Chapter 19

Artificial Intelligence and the Transformation in Political Communication and Campaigns: Ethical Debates, Analyses, and Cases

Nurhak Atar

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-0774-0217>

Istanbul Bilgi University, Turkey

ABSTRACT

The rapid development of new communication technologies and the fact that social media and then AI play an essential role in communication bring along new debates for political communication and campaigns. While AI technology accelerates technological developments with its contributions in accessing and processing information, its different uses lead to the manipulation of information, making it difficult to access accurate information and disrupting the perception of reality. In the political context, AI presents both opportunities and challenges, offering technological and democratic principles. Therefore, this study aims to explain the role of AI in political communication, the impact of AI in political campaigns, the circulation of deep fake videos on social media and AI ethics (Privacy, bias and misinformation) by giving examples. Besides these, the use of AI in the general and local elections as case studies in the different part of the World were discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

The ultimate goal of political campaigns is to maximize the probability of electoral victory. This is why the relationship between data and political campaigns is crucial today, especially in the context of political parties. For this reason, whether a campaign is successful or not is evaluated based on factors such as how many voters it can influence. Explaining the focus of political campaigns, Dalton et al. (2011) describe the long-standing interest and views of political parties in collecting data that can be analyzed for a successful outcome in elections. According to them, political campaigners use a variety of new media and social media tools, as well as data-driven and AI-enabled technologies to interact with voters and develop a list of people's voting preferences (pp.56-57). In addition, political parties tend to collect their own data on voters' interests and voting preferences, enabling them to build large data sets at national and local levels. In the process of political campaigning, those in charge of preparing political campaigns tend to analyze large and detailed datasets in order to generate the necessary predictions. While the adoption of these new analytical methods has not fundamentally changed the basic functioning of political campaigns, increased efficiency gives data-driven campaigns and AI-powered tools a competitive advantage.

“Political leaders place their societies in a historical context in relation to AI technology. This historical context is portrayed either as a seemingly unprecedented rupture that goes beyond previous social experiences or as a rupture that stands in the legacy of past historical transformations. Both historical motifs transform the current technological development of AI into an autonomous agent, a deterministic force that disrupts our societies” (Bareis&Katzenbach, 2022 p.864). Due to this force, AI is more prominent than ever in our experience of communication technologies, with scholars now suggesting that AI tools have become an integral part of mediated communication (Sundar, 2020 p.78). These improvements in technology have led to the development of various techniques and methods that can be helpful for many social science researchers. AI tools, which are increasingly used in different sectors, are frequently utilized in recent election campaigns and political communication.

When we look at the studies and literature on AI, it's seen that extensive research has been conducted in many fields. Today, it's observed that AI technologies play an important role in many fields- data journalism (Broussard, 2014); public relations (Adi, 2023); sociology and inequalities created by AI (Adaş&Erbay, 2022); technology and social media (Kreiss&Mcgregor, 2017). With the development of AI, it's known that political communication research, election management and political campaigns are also impacted by this transformation (Calisir, 2023 p.8). Particularly as verbal machine-human communication evolves, the use of chat technology offers a natural experience for users and has personalized features. For

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