

# AI for Inside Ballot Box

Four Steps to Take Protect Elections and Defend Democracy<sup>1</sup>

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## Why AI and Elections Na Important Matter

Technology don dey affect elections for long – e get beta side, e get bad side. E dey help decide who go win and how people go talk about di election. For example, Internet don make am easy for people to organize beta, make dem fit support di ideas and things wey dem believe in. But e still be strong weapon for fake news.

Now, Artificial Intelligence (AI) don come with new wahala. E go make deepfake video and fake news plenty, e fit cause big security problem, bring manipulative bots, and create fake accounts wey go spread fake info. But at di same time, AI fit help politicians connect with voters, control wetin people believe, and manage how information dey spread. If dem use am well, e fit change how election dey happen. But if nobody do anything, AI fit make di political wahala worse – e fit cause more division and make people no trust democracy again.

Government gats take strong action on AI now, especially as election wahala don dey increase for many places. If dem work well for different areas, e go help protect democracy, make people trust di system more, and make sure say AI go help election be better, no be to scatter am.

## Things Wey You Suppose Know

- Recent examples from Brazil, Romania, Gabon, di US, and oda countries don show say di way politicians dey use AI fit spoil elections and shake democracy.
- Many countries no ready for di AI wahala: plenty no get law wey go guide AI use for elections, political parties never agree on fair way to use AI, and most places no sabi how to fight AI attacks wey fit spoil their democracy.
- We dey recommend dis four actions: government suppose update election rules (like to ban fake AI-generated content), political parties suppose get code of conduct wey go guide how dem go use AI for politics, election authorities suppose set up independent teams wey go stop and respond to AI -related wahala, and for international level, governments suppose create International AI Electoral Trustkeepers plus protocols to handle cross-border interference.

# How AI Fit Threaten Elections and Democracy

E get many ways wey politicians—both for here and abroad—fit use AI take spoil elections and shake democracy. For example, for Brazil election wey happen for October 2024, one research from Digital Forensic Research Lab show say within six months before election, local politicians or their supporters use AI at least 75 times to create fake images, audio, and videos—either to make themselves look good or to spoil their opponents' name. Worse still, five women wey be candidates suffer from deepfake pornography, wey dem use AI take create fake dirty videos about dem.<sup>2</sup> Dis kind thing dey make plenty women fear to enter politics or hold public position.<sup>3</sup>

For December 2024, Romania's Foreign Intelligence Service talk say Russia try influence dia presidential election. First, Russia use far-right pro-Russian propaganda and AI-generated content, spread am through plenty social media channels and fake AI-created accounts. Second, dem use AI (wey fit create malware wey go bypass cybersecurity defense) to arrange about 85,000 cyber attacks against Romania's Permanent Electoral Authority, so dem fit enter dia election database. At di end, dis Russia interference make Romania's Constitutional Court cancel di first round of di presidential election.<sup>4</sup>

For Gabon 2023 election campaign, wahala burst as people dey prepare for di historic triple vote—presidential, legislative, and local elections.

Towards di end of di campaign, audio recordings show for online. Di audio be like say two big opposition leaders dey discuss strategy, alliance, and foreign support. Di sitting president accuse dem say dem wan start wahala for di country, while di opposition talk say na fake AI audio dem use to spoil dia name.

Dis Gabon case show how AI don make election talk more complicated, because e don hard for voters to know wetin be true and wetin be fake.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, for di 2024 U.S. presidential election campaign, experts test big AI models to check how well dem fit give correct election information. Di test show say di AI models no too balance—some dey give different election gist based on di language wey person use.

E still show say wetin AI companies promise about giving correct election info no really match how dia AI models take perform.<sup>6</sup>

Dis examples show say many countries and governments no ready to face di wahala wey AI don bring. Our recommendations show ways wey dem fit take avoid or reduce di bad effect wey new technology fit get on elections.

***Local elections dey more at risk to AI manipulation because local democracies no too get resources and protection wey fit help dem fight di risks well.***

## First challenge Plenty governments never put laws wey go guide how AI fit dey used for elections

Di fact say no clear rules dey to guide AI use for elections don create legal wahala. E make am hard for government to hold people responsible or stop abuse.

Most election laws wey dey today na old ones wey dem adopt before generative AI become popular. Because of dis, di laws no fit properly address di special risks wey AI bring. For example, plenty countries no even define wetin be “synthetic media” or “AI-generated content,” nor di limits of how dem fit use am for elections.

Only small number of lawmakers don discuss or try pass laws wey go tackle AI election wahala. For example, for UK, di defamation law dey protect people from fake talk, but e no clear on how e take cover fake images or videos.<sup>7</sup>

To make sure say elections dey transparent and accountable, governments need to create clear and uniform rules. If dem fit close dis legal gaps, e go help protect democracy and reduce di fear wey AI wahala dey bring for elections.

## Action 1

### Governments suppose update electoral rules

Governments suppose update election laws so that politicians, political parties, tech companies, and voters go sabi say:

- how synthetic media fit take dey used for anything wey concern elections;
- which kain use of AI systems dem no go allow or dem go limit for elections, and;
- who go take blame if person break di election rules or person use AI do something wey dey against di law.

To make sure say new election laws no go over-restrict political talk, di rules suppose match di level of risk wey dem wan prevent.

Independent bodies wey go oversee AI use for elections need correct technical knowledge and enough funding to make sure say dem fit enforce di rules well.

Governments need to make di meaning of key words clear—like synthetic data, generative AI, AI-generated content, and misleading or deceptive information—so e go easy to update old election laws where necessary.

On top dis matter, dem suppose also think about introducing di following compulsory rules:

- **Governments suppose introduce bans wey go stop people from using, posting, showing, or sharing AI-generated content wey fit mislead voters or affect election wahala. For example, dem fit make law wey go forbid di use of AI-created images, videos, or audio wey go give false impression about candidates, referendum campaigns, or di election process. E go also stop anything wey fit spread fake news about election matter.**
- **Politicians and political parties suppose follow transparency rules by clearly labeling any AI-generated images, audio, or videos wey dem use, post, show, or share during elections. To make sure say di labels make sense, governments suppose check scientific research and hear from di public on how best to design dem. Di labels suppose dey easy for people to**

see and understand, with correct attention to things like design, wording, size, how long e go show, position, and timing.

- **Governments suppose make online platforms put label for AI-generated political ads, plus make dem create and follow content moderation rules to stop spread of harmful AI-generated content.**

*Election laws suppose cover chatbots because dem fit spread fake information about important election matters, like where to vote, wetin person need carry go polling unit, or even false gist about candidates' criminal records.<sup>8</sup>*

## Second challenge

### Political parties never agree on wetin go make elections free and fair now wey AI don enter di matter

Now, political parties and candidates fit use AI tools to do different things wey fit affect elections, like to create deepfake videos and audios, spread fake news on a large scale, target voters one by one with customized fake information, or even use bots to take control online conversations and manipulate public opinion.

If no regulation, clear guidelines, or ethical rules dey, political parties fit use AI in ways wey go reduce voter trust, spread fake news, and fit affect election results negatively.

If political parties no get agreed rules to guide dem, dem fit feel say dem must use AI more aggressively so dem no go lose to dia opponents. Dis kind political pressure fit make parties focus on using AI to win by hook or crook, instead of keeping elections free and fair.

## Action 2

### Political parties suppose agree on a code of conduct wey go guide how dem use AI for elections

Di aim of codes of conduct na to make political actors pledge say dem go keep elections free and fair by following ethical behaviors. Di codes of conduct on AI dey promote transparency and honesty in hoe dem take dey use technology for election matter.

Some countries don already introduce AI codes of conduct for elections. For 2023, five political parties for Switzerland pledge to use AI transparently, instead of make dem use am do wuru-wuru. For the European Parliament elections (2024), European parties agree on specific rules wey go guide the use of AI. United Kingdom and other regions don dey work on similar codes.

Codes of conduct for AI use for election matter suppose make political parties agree say:

- **No use AI to take create fake or misleading content to deceive voters;**
- **Clearly label AI-generated content when dem use am in a major way, since laws never fully cover dis area;**
- **No spread of misleading AI content and call out anybody wey dey post or amplify such false information;**
- **Issue training & guidelines for party staff, members, and campaigners on responsible use of AI;**
- **No creation or use of fake accounts, bots, or AI chatbots to take deceive or manipulate voters;**
- **Chatbots must include moderation layers to direct users to official election information. Regular monitoring, audit, and post-election review of use of AI.**

## Third challenge

### Most places never ready to face AI-powered attacks on elections and democracy

Governments don already get plans to handle big wahala like flood, protest, or disease outbreak. But when e reach AI wahala for elections, many no dey prepared.

To tackle AI wahala for elections no be small thing, e get plenty sides.

First, plenty governments no get better monitoring system to catch AI wahala like fake news, deepfake videos, and other AI tricks wey fit spoil the democratic process. Dis problem worse because gap dey for work wey government, social media companies, news people, and civil society dey do together. Even when dem see say something no pure, e no too clear how dem go take share information or join hand to solve di matter.

The second tin be say, plenty election officials no sabi AI well enough to know when wahala don enter, so e dey hard for dem to act fast. Dis lack of knowledge no be only for dem—e affect di whole democracy setup. Even di people wey dey work for polling units and election observers, wey suppose help protect election integrity, no dey get better training on digital threats. If voters ask dem question about AI wahala or manipulation, dem fit no sabi wetin to talk or do.

Thirdly, many government agencies no get di correct technical and human capacity to track and fight AI-driven attacks. Because of dis, dem dey always wait until wahala don happen before dem react, instead of putting better defense strategies in place from di beginning.

### Action 3

## **Electoral authorities suppose put together independent team wey go sabi different areas like AI, cybersecurity, law, and election management**

Electoral authorities suppose get independent team wey go work under judicial supervision. Dis team suppose get support from all people wey get hand for the democratic and electoral processes. Di team go need to work with media, online platforms, and international bodies. E suppose include political party representatives to make sure say any emergency action or solution go dey fair and balanced.

Di team suppose dey work 24/7, not just during election time, so dem go fit monitor and respond to any threat wey go be threat to democracy. Dem go develop AI Electoral Response strategy wey go give clear guidelines on how to check, report, and handle AI related threats to election. Dis plan go include early warning system like wetin public health, cybersecurity, and disaster management dey use, so dem go fit detect problem quick quick.

All di people wey dey media and Internet space suppose join hand for di response plan, so dem go fit stop di attack from spread and quickly inform citizens.

Electoral authorities suppose run tabletop exercises or simulations make everybody understand how AI fit take work, test di response plan, know how to react to incidents, and see di weak spots wey bad people fit use take cause wahala.

Di AI Electoral Response Plan suppose protect citizens' fundamental rights, make e no turn to tool for surveillance or control of political expression.

***To make sure say AI no scatter elections, dem suppose train all di people wey dey involved for election matter—like polling station volunteers and observers—on AI and cybersecurity well well.***

## **Fourth challenge**

### **Most times, AI-related election interference dey involve hidden actors wey dey operate across different jurisdictions**

Di fact say many AI-related election attacks dey happen across different countries make am hard for one jurisdiction alone to fight dem well. Di matter worse because some governments no get di expertise, tools, or resources wey dem need to detect and stop AI-related election threats properly.

If international protocols no align, e go hard to hold di people wey do di attack accountable because countries get different legal systems, power to investigate, and jurisdiction limits.

Democratic countries suppose know say attack on one democracy na attack on di principles wey join all democracies together. So, e dey important make dem join hand take protect shared democratic values, build citizen trust, and make sure say elections for di world dey credible.



## Action 4

### **Governments suppose create International AI Electoral Trustkeepers and set up international protocols wey go help dem support each other legally if AI related wahala interfere with election matter**

Governments suppose set up one central international platform and unit wey go monitor and respond to AI related wahala for elections: International AI Electoral Trustkeepers.

Dis Trustkeepers go get experts from different fields plus institutions wey go dey focus on detecting, countering, and reducing AI related wahala for elections. Dem go offer technical support to countries wey AI fit affect their elections, provide expertise, tools, and collaboration to fight transnational electoral threats. Dem go still give crisis support by sending quick-response teams during elections and go help monitor and control AI threats in real-time for high-risk situations.

Dem fit create dis International AI Electoral Trustkeepers from existing programs wey dey support elections or protect countries from AI wahala. For example, dem fit add new AI resources like special experts or permanent AI specialists, plus legal and technical skills, to the UN Electoral Assistance Division wey dey help countries organize elections wey people go trust.<sup>9</sup> Dem fit also use the International Network of AI Safety Institutes train dis Trustkeepers and send dem go different countries for special missions.

If dem need industry expertise, the International AI Electoral Trustkeepers fit get support from players wey dey private sector, like AI and platform companies wey dey part of the Tech Accord to Combat AI-Generated Election Interference.<sup>10</sup>

To fit investigate and prosecute AI-driven electoral interference well, e go important make countries rely on mutual legal assistance mechanisms. E go make cooperation between different jurisdictions easy, help collect and share evidence wey fit stand for court from different countries, and make sure

say people wey dey use AI take manipulate elections across borders, no go fit dodge accountability because of legal boundaries.

These kind judicial mechanisms don already work well for other transnational wahala wey need cross-border cooperation and evidence sharing, like cybercrime, digital fraud, terrorism, organized crime, human rights violations, and war crimes.

***These international mechanisms need to dey transparent so dem fit protect people fundamental rights.***

## Conclusion

The way AI go affect democracy never dey certain.

Even though this brief focus on risks, AI fit actually strengthen democracy. Election officials fit use AI tools take handle complex tasks well, make voting easier, and increase civic participation. For Pakistan 2024 election wey get plenty wahala, AI help opposition leader wey dem jail send audio messages to voters and mobilize dem even with all the restrictions.<sup>11</sup> As we dey make future plans, democracy advocates suppose check how AI fit help improve democratic systems.

For now, the main priority na to protect democracies from one serious threat: rogue actors, both national and foreign, wey dey misuse AI.

E require action for two levels.

Governments go need update dia laws, political parties must agree to work together, and electoral authorities must prepare well to defend democracy from people wey wan abuse AI.

Between countries, need for co-operation dey necessary. No country fit fight AI wahala alone. Nations go need make dia laws align on top AI related election interference. This one go make individual defence strong and also help everybody join body resist any attempt to scatter democracy for di whole world.

If we take these steps today, we go build stronger, more inclusive, and more trustworthy democratic systems for the future.

## Notes

1. Na for English language dem write di original version of dis text with di title "AI in the Ballot Box". The pesin wey do dis Pidgin translation na Mudiaga Abraham Odibo from Police Reform Secretariat for Abuja, Naija.
2. Farrugia, B. (2024, November 26). Brazil's electoral deepfake law tested as AI-generated content targeted local elections. DFRLab. <https://dfrlab.org/2024/11/26/brazil-election-ai-deepfakes>
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## The Global Policy Briefs on AI

The Global Policy Briefs on AI initiative na joint work of IVADO, Canada's top AI research and knowledge mobilization group for Université de Montréal, and the AI + Society Initiative for University of Ottawa. E aim to give policymakers policy recommendations wey go help dem navigate key AI challenges wey dey affect di world.

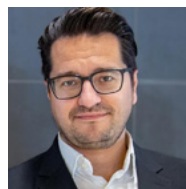
For dis first instalment, professors Catherine Régis and Florian Martin-Bariteau gather top AI experts from different parts of di world to develop practical policy guidance on how AI dey affect democracy and electoral integrity. Dem produce dis brief after one week-long retreat wey Società Italiana per l'Organizzazione Internazionale (SIOI) host for Rome, Italy, in December 2024. Réjean Roy, wey be director of Knowledge Mobilization for IVADO, support di writing.

Dis project happen thanks to di support of Fonds de recherche du Québec, CEIMIA, di Canada CIFAR Chair in AI and Human Rights for Mila, and di University of Ottawa Research Chair in Technology and Society. E also get help from Délégation du Québec à Rome and SIOI wey support di retreat arrangement.

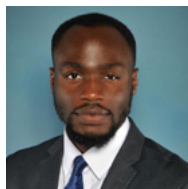
Di views wey dey inside dis policy brief na views of di authors dem.



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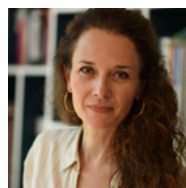
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Dis na joint effort of



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