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Democracy, Development and AI: A comparative Study to Political Systems, Electoral Processes and Economic Expansion

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to explore the nexus between democracy, development and artificial intelligence (AI), and how AI is reconfiguring electoral processes and political debate in democratic and autocratic regimes. To understand the role of governance, electoral processes and AI in economic growth, the study compares the impact of AI in democratic systems like the U.S. and India on the one hand, and the authoritarian models of China and Singapore on the other. The analysis also shows that democracies are more adept at holding people accountable and more open to transparency, compared to authoritarian regimes that are more efficient in executing long term economic strategies. In addition to this, the article then looks at how AI is being used to manipulate politics, voter behaviour and inequality. Case studies of India, Singapore and China show how even the most complex situations of economic development can be accomplished through different governance structures. The research concludes that democracy and AI are not mutually exclusive, and can actually reinforce each other to promote sustainable development, but authoritarianism is capable of fostering rapid economic development at the expense of political freedoms.

INTRODUCTION

This article seeks to explore the relationship between democracy, development and AI, and specifically how AI is transforming electoral processes and political discourse. Electoral dynamics have been changed by AI in two ways: influencing voter behaviour through targeted advertising and detecting voting irregularities. Written by Yıldız *et al.* (2023), democracy thrives on political participation, accountability and on free elections, yet the more involvement that AI has in elections, the more concern over the transparency, bias and manipulation is rising. However, the performances of some authoritarian states have called into question an optimistic view of the connexion between democracy, development and AI (Gerring *et al.*, 2022). The objective of this paper is to compare the efficiency of the democratic system with the autocratic system in development process based on the results of empirical research on economic growth in the different types of governance. On this basis, we shall analyse both arguments, select examples from around the world and evaluate the effects of political institutions and electoral processes on economic and social results.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Democracy and development, including AI as a development tool, are based on accountability, openness, and participation (Grinin & Korotayev, 2022). Democracy's periodic elections force politicians to follow public opinion, unlike other governance systems (Diamond, 2022). This suggests strategies that boost economic development and social wellbeing. The US, UK, Germany, and others demonstrate how democratic institutions may coexist with economic success. Yamamura (2023) found that the US GDP per capita was \$75,000 in

2023, indicating economic stability across the decades. German GDP per capita is above \$60,000, demonstrating how a strong democracy may boost economic stability. According to Wallerstein (2023), democratic nations attract more FDI than nondemocratic countries due to the rule of law, which protects property rights and contracts. Democracy provides legal frameworks that prevent government involvement, which investors like (Dallago & Casagrande, 2023). That boosts innovation, economic growth, and industrial progress.

Democracies in the West have been evolving, but not elsewhere. Thus, Indian democracy, development, and AI must turn political liberty into economic growth. India has the most democracy, development, and AI in the world and has grown rapidly, particularly following the 1990s liberalisation, according to Tai (2023). India's GDP was \$3.7 trillion in 2023, making it the seventh biggest economy. Its 22% poverty rate remains a problem. However, income and service disparity remains distinct across states and regions (Dahl, 2023). Though political and electoral process freedoms enhance progress, governance metrics, physical structures, and institutions are essential to development. Tabellini and Magistretti (2024) also studied Brazil. For almost three decades, the nation has enjoyed democracy, growth, and AI, but political instability and corruption have caused volatility. In 2023, Brazil had a GDP per capita of \$9,700, much lower than the average for middle-income democratic nations (Claassen & Magalhães, 2022). The nation has tremendous poverty, inequality, and unemployment, demonstrating that democracy, development, and AI do not inevitably lead to economic growth.

In addition to this, AI plays a crucial role in shaping electoral narratives, altering political campaigns and

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voter engagement. It aids in investigating voter behavior, creating predictive models, and controlling political messaging through micro-targeting (Acheampong *et al.*, 2022). However, this has been criticised to have brought in issues of transparency and manipulation. For example, in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, AI algorithms targeted the undecided voters without their consent (Claassen & Magalhães, 2022). Politics of AI also reveal the problems with data gathering and processing, and can show discrimination in society. For instance, in the 2019 U.K. general election, AI tools oversampled the affluent and the inhabitants of large cities while ignoring the rural and economically poor voters (Yıldız *et al.*, 2023). Such a dispersion of political messages is detrimental to socioeconomic injustices and ostracises those who are not reached by the messages. In authoritarian systems, it is even more worrisome because AI is used in the electoral processes. In China, AI contributes to economic growth and monitoring political storylines, while governmental restrictions on electoral processes use facial recognition technology and data surveillance. This can undermine democratic principles and consolidate power, rather than promoting fair electoral competition (Canen & Wantchekon, 2022).

Authoritarianism and Development: The Chinese Example

Democracy is crucial to growth and development, yet authoritarian governments have had decent economic success in recent decades. Repucci and Slipowitz (2022) found that the Chinese model is the most persuasive illustration of how an authoritarian regime may transform the economy. After the 1978 economic liberalisation, almost 800 million Chinese fled poverty and attained 9.5% GDP growth over four decades (Cardoso & Faletto, 2024). According to research, China's GDP was \$19 trillion in 2023, making it the second-largest economy. According to Nguea *et al.* (2024), China's economic system is "state capitalism" since the government oversees key industries and provides markets for others. This method has helped China create fast-growing sectors, infrastructure, manufacturing, technology, and renewable energy. The Chinese government has achieved long-term economic objectives without election cycles (Canen & Wantchekon, 2022). Because the government controls resources and decision-making, megaprojects like the Belt and Road Initiative are conceivable. Liu *et al.* (2022) observed that China has an authoritarian political structure, which allows for swift judgements in today's competitive and shock-prone environment.

In this study, Hermassi (2023) noted that China's progress has been criticised. Political liberty, journalistic freedom, and human rights breaches are crucial. Authoritarian regimes have long been accused of repressing political dissent and people's freedom. Despite its strong economic success, China's growth approach harms the environment, increases inequality, and causes demographic issues, including population ageing (Bulfone, 2023). Long-

term practicality of such a paradigm for China is also questioned. According to Hardi *et al.* (2023), these successes will be difficult to maintain as the population ages and the workforce shrinks. Political rights may be revoked, causing societal unrest, particularly if economic development is endangered. According to Hamid *et al.* (2022), China's political system is autocratic, but its economy has achieved extraordinary success and eliminated poverty. The applicability of China's approach to other authoritarian countries is unclear. Centralisation of authority, Confucianism's focus on order, and state capitalism contributed to its success (Brownlee & Miao, 2022). Other authoritarian nations lack these requirements, and efforts to emulate China's growth model have failed.

Comparative Case Studies: India vs. Singapore

India is the biggest democracy in South Asia and has grown economically since the 1990s liberalisation measures. Its developmental progress has been inconsistent. It possesses a fast-growing technological industry, a robust liberal democracy, and an increasing middle-income population, but also high poverty, poor infrastructure, and political instability (Grinin & Korotayev, 2022). However, Indian democracy, progress, and AI have fostered political rivalry, free speech, and civil society, which are necessary for social and economic sustainability. Singapore, however, is different. Singapore, one of the wealthiest nations, is a semi-authoritarian city-state (Gerring *et al.*, 2022). Its 2023 GDP per capita was above \$82,000, placing it in the top five nations. Political parties and free expression are limited in Singapore, where the People's Action Party has ruled since 1965. According to Yıldız *et al.* (2023), Singapore's leadership has implemented measures to reduce corruption in its innovative, technological, and international business-orientated economy management. Yamamura (2023) adds that Singapore illustrates that dictatorship may attain high development and living standards with correct economic policy.

Economic Development Indicators: Democracy vs. Authoritarianism

When comparing democracies versus authoritarian regimes, numerous criteria stand out. For instance, industrialised democracies like the US, Germany, and Norway have greater GDP per capita than authoritarian nations like China, Russia, and Saudi Arabia (Dallago & Casagrande, 2023). In 2023, Norway had a GDP per capita of almost \$89,000, while the US had close to \$75,000. Despite China's rapid economic development, Wallerstein (2023) estimated its GDP per capita at \$14,000, lower than the aforementioned statistics. Like voting, democracies spend more on education and social services; thus, literacy is greater. Tai (2023) found that Norway and Finland had virtually 100% literacy rates, whereas authoritarian countries struggle with education. Even prosperous countries like China have

educational disparity. Urban education is far better than rural education; China had 96.8% literacy in 2021 (Dahl, 2023). Poverty is also an essential factor. Social safety and welfare systems lessen poverty in most democracies. In 2023, poverty rates in Norway were 4.5%, and in Sweden, 3.5% (Claassen & Magalhães, 2022). However, the Chinese government reported a poverty rate below 1%. Tabellini and Magistretti (2024) note that this statistic does not account for geographical heterogeneity and the trend towards income differentiation.

The Interplay of Political Systems, Electoral Processes and Economic Transformation

Political structures, electoral processes, and institutions' interactions with economic processes remain complicated in current development and growth debates, defying simplistic models and traditional ideas. Thus, Repucci and Slipowitz (2022) suggest that globalisation, technical advancement, and shifting geopolitics are blurring the line between democracies and authoritarianism. Development is no longer considered just as governance. A more detailed study of these processes must address the linkages between these systems, the pressures that cross national boundaries, and the domestic governance models that determine developmental routes (Cardoso & Faletto, 2024).

In contrast, Nguea *et al.* (2024) found that many countries' economic development is determined by their internal politics and their ability to integrate into the global economy and preserve their political and cultural identity. New regional hegemonies with semi- or mixed-authoritarian political and electoral processes undercut the linear narrative of postindustrial consumer society as a unique destiny of liberal democracies or authoritarian modernisations (Bulfone, 2023). Turkey and Vietnam hybridise the two systems to reject the orthodoxy, and their impacts on economic development are visible despite their social, political, and electoral ramifications. Regardless of political system or election process, nations must adapt to global concerns like climate change, the technological gap, migration, and others (Acheampong *et al.*, 2022). Traditional economic performance measurements include GDP growth and per capita income, but sustainability, the digital environment, and human capital are increasingly evaluated. Thus, Liu *et al.* (2022) suggest that to understand how political systems and election processes affect economic development in the 21st century, one must go beyond governance structures.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study used qualitative research to analyse the relationship between democracy, development, and AI in different political systems. The data used in the study is secondary data sourced from academic databases, including Google Scholar, Scopus, and the Web of Science. These platforms were selected because they provide searching of peer-reviewed articles effectively

and comprehensively, thus providing access to relevant and credible sources. This research is mostly based on the materials published during the last ten years, and the analysis is limited to the articles published after 2014, in order to depict the recent tendencies in the AI evolution and its effects on politics, votes, and the economy. AI is an emerging discipline that has grown rapidly over the last few years, especially in the areas of machine learning, data analysis, and automation. This way, the present research stays in tune with the recent literature that has been published after 2014, so that the findings of the study are in line with the current and most recent understanding of how AI is related to politics and economic growth. This period also corresponds with the rise of the use of AI in electoral processes, political campaigns, and governance, which makes it most suitable for the study.

As a general type of research, the qualitative approach is relevant for analysing several intertwined and culturally sensitive factors such as political actions, decision-making systems, as well as the moral aspects of AI use in democracies and dictatorships. Hence, through the adoption of qualitative data, this research was able to analyse the diverse forms deployed in the application of AI in political strategies and its effects on voters, political dialogue, and the patterns of political regimes.

The data collected was then subjected to content analysis, a method that is widely used when it comes to handling qualitative data only. This approach has been used because it defines main trends in the given literature, for example, how politicians apply AI, how it affects the voters, and how this technology works in political systems. In the same measure, content analysis also helps in defining the gaps or the inconsistency in the works, which is a vital element in building up the knowledge on the issue. Thus, the study was able not only to determine the current state of AI's relation with democracy and development but also to lay the basis for a comparative analysis of this relation with democracies and authoritarian states.

Ethical dilemmas formed a critical part of this study, and therefore appropriate measures were always taken at this stage. Therefore, the present research did not follow any primary data collection activities, and as a result, no human subjects were directly involved in data collection. However, ethical issues were put into consideration with an aim of using data from this paper from scholarly papers and peer-reviewed journals only. They are used to ensure that the research complied with the academic rules and also to avoid cases of plagiarism. Also, the research focuses on the ethics of employing artificial intelligence in political systems and processes, including fairness, manipulation, and inequality. Ethical problems categorised in such a manner are addressed within the research, and therefore, the use of artificial intelligence in modern-day governance systems is analysed ethically.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Democracy, development, and AI, or relations between the factors, is the topic that could give the answer to

how these factors interact in various political systems. This research, which was undertaken using a secondary qualitative analysis of articles from Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science, restricted the research to AI use in democratic and authoritarian states. In this chapter, the author describes the prior decade's major conclusions and their applicability to political institutions, economic development, and governance in democracy and autocracy.

The Role of AI in Political Systems

Artificial intelligence is making a significant impact in politics by changing the operations of the political processes and government and the very conduct of elections. In democracies such as America and India, machine learning and other AI technologies have been used in politics during the campaigns and for voters' manipulation. These countries' political parties use AI to understand the voters and decide who the swing voters are and how to maximise the returns on the campaign. Given recent elections in the US and India, it is possible to identify that AI data analytics, including monitoring social media and voter profiling, enable highly personalised campaigning to voters. These innovations are highly valuable for increasing voter turnout, yet they also bring the question of the ethical usage of AI to influence voters into light.

Democratic campaigns have employed AI in their campaigns to enable micro-targeting and political messaging, hence posing a threat of manipulating the voters. For instance, Yildiz *et al.* (2023) described how the AI applications applied in the 2019 elections of the United Kingdom focused on the residents of the developed cities and ignored the people from the rural areas who are economically poor. These disparate levels of political communication therefore do not only violate the tenets of democracy and fair polling but also worsen inequality. AI, therefore, has dual implications: On the one hand, it can improve the efficiency of the campaign; on the other hand, it can alienate minorities and alter the dynamics of democracy.

On the other hand, countries such as China and Singapore apply AI in more state-controlled and centralised manners. In China, the AI tools are integrated into the government surveillance network to spy on citizens and enforce political conformity. As Canen and Wantchekon (2022) noted, AI is not only a tool of economic development but also a tool to convey the political story that the government wants. The combination of facial recognition technology and big data helps to implement mass surveillance that violates people's rights and suppresses political opponents. This utilisation of AI for authority and sentiment control is an example of the potential hazards of AI in autocratic systems where AI is applied for the purpose of securing political regimes rather than empowering political participation.

AI in Singapore, even though it is not as advanced as in China, also has the similar role of supporting

government policies and economic plans. The Singapore government applies AI in the improvement of policy-making and provision of services in order to build a Smart Nation. This also comes with its disadvantages, as the AI technologies that were key in the achievement of economic growth are also used in surveillance and control over citizens. This conflict between promoting economic growth and preserving state power is one of the most critical issues of ethical relevance in the Singaporean context on the use of AI technologies.

AI and Economic Development

Another area of interest investigated in this research was the specific use and application of economic development in democratic and authoritarian regimes with the help of AI. Lately, it has emerged as a pertinent force for shifting the economic landscape of many countries, especially those enjoying technological superiority. In democracies such as the USA and India, AI is now the agent of change in many operational sectors, including healthcare, education, manufacturing, and finance sectors. In the health care industry, it has contributed to disease diagnosis, improved the health care of the patient, and boosted the outcome of research that is beneficial to the economy. In the same way, the optimisation of productivity, reduction of cost, and innovation in India have been realised through the applications of AI in agriculture, energy, and finance (Acheampong *et al.*, 2022).

Even in India, the application of AI is also being used to tackle social injustice issues and improve the delivery of critical services like education and healthcare in rural and other deprived regions. The government has launched policies meant to ensure that the advantages of AI are not confined to the larger cities. However, as Acheampong *et al.* (2022) pointed out, the fact that AI technologies are still relatively scarce means that areas with poor infrastructure, particularly rural regions, may not be able to harness the potential of AI for economic development. Therefore, while AI has the ability to close the gap, it also has the ability to widen the gap between the urban and rural areas.

In China, an authoritarian state, AI is used to enable fast economic development, especially in industries like manufacturing, e-commerce, and transportation. Despite being relatively new to the field, Chinese government strategic investment has placed the country at the forefront of AI. However, autocratic systems that hold a high concentration of power are better positioned to put into practice AI policies for development, albeit often at the expense of human rights and privacy (Canen & Wantchekon, 2022). China's utilisation of AI in its strategic plan, "Made in China 2025," to develop the country into a technological leader is evidence of the effectiveness of AI in achieving state economic strategies. However, this approach has problems regarding the ethical concerns of using AI in controlling public opinions and violating privacy (Cardoso & Faletto, 2024).

Likewise, Singapore's application of AI in economic

advancement has strengthened its status as the leading technology and innovation node in the world. Smart city solutions and AI-based public services are among the components of the digital economy that have put the country among the leaders of global competitors. However, the use of AI in surveillance and social control at the same time draws attention to the conflict between economic development and freedom. In the view of Gerring *et al.* (2022), the proceeding of AI in Singapore's governance can be seen as opportunities to make progress with the governance in Singapore, but the manipulation of the principles of openness and honesty in Singapore.

Ethical Considerations

Several potential ethical concerns that were linked to the use of AI in both the democratic and authoritarian regimes were apparent in the discussion. AI is a concern in democracies with reference to privacy, consent, and fairness, specifically in relation to elections. As noted above, the extensive use of personal data in political targeting raises question marks over their use and misuse. According to Liu *et al.* (2022), there is a need to ensure that the growing advancement and employment of artificial intelligence in providing political directions has checks and bounds to ensure that such technology is not exploited to manipulate voters. It makes utilising AI in a defined electoral system more potent because the AI is also capable of providing fake news. But these ethical questions become more complicated with authoritarianism, as shall be observed later in the discussion. The application of AI is most of the time used as a means of oppression and monitoring of people's freedom. The Chinese government's application of AI in the suppression of dissent and manipulation of public opinion, as seen in Canen and Wantchekon (2022), is an example of the ways in which AI can be utilised to control political opposition and acquire even more power. Such systems are opaque and unaccountable, which are significant ethical issues when it comes to human rights and civil liberties.

CONCLUSION

It is therefore argued that democracy and development are not the same and there is no simple cause and effect between the two. Hence, even where democracy was seen to have a positive relationship with economic growth, democracy cannot be said to be a determinant of economic growth. China and Singapore have also proved that other forms of government, such as autocratic, can also foster fast development but at the expense of political freedom, social justice, and electoral politics. In conclusion, it can be argued that the potential for development that can be achieved within any given political system and electoral processes will be determined by the quality of governance and the performance of institutions and policies that will benefit the entire society. In the long run, democracies benefit from political stability, accountability, and social inclusion, which are key factors

to sustainable development. Nevertheless, authoritarian political systems and electoral processes may also be better suited to formulating and realising short-term economic strategies and, therefore, fast industrialisation. Democracy and development are two concepts that will always have significant interaction with the changing political and electoral processes and economic status of the world, and as a result, this subject will always be relevant in the provision of lessons for scholars and policymakers.

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