

INTERROGATING THE POLITICS OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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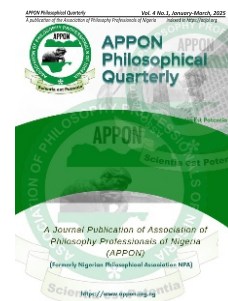
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ABSTRACT

It has become a common knowledge that Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a multi-purpose technological algorithm, with the potentials of recreating itself. These algorithms are raising several ethical, political, and social issues which are reshaping the society against conventional understanding of justice, autonomy, and governance. The central problem of this paper lies in the opacity of AI-driven decisions, which often reproduce or even exacerbate existing inequalities. AI systems created and used by governments and businesses, in particular, run the risk of sustaining prejudice in fields including finance, employment procedures, healthcare, and criminal justice. These issues raise the question of who is to be held responsible for the results of AI, particularly when those systems function in “black-box” forms that make it difficult to understand the reasoning behind their choices? The findings imply that the unequal distribution of information and power, which gives a select group of governments and tech firms monopolies over AI development and governance, is the basis for AI politics. The paper uses critical, analytic and evaluative methods to show that AI has the capability of building a just and a humane society, these prospects can be explored for political or democratic process. The paper concludes that democratizing AI research and governance with a focus on accountability, transparency, and the inclusion of different perspectives in AI-related policy-making is necessary to address the politics of artificial intelligence.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Politics, Transparency, Accountability, Algorithmic governance, Inequality.

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence has an impact on many industries globally. It offers huge advantages, but it also brings up major political issues. These issues include big tech companies holding too much power, the moral effects of AI choices, and the possible

increase in unfairness. The political side of Artificial Intelligence shows in how it can make choices which affects democracy, money distribution, and social fairness in big ways. By getting AI’s political parts, we can better tackle its problems and chances. This paper seeks to interrogate how AI

shapes political power, including how the government, companies, and people relate to each other. To achieve the above objective, the paper shall be divided into four sections. To begin with, the paper shall give a definition of the idea of the politics of Artificial Intelligence; the second part shall look at the historical development of the politics of Artificial Intelligence, while the third part delves into the Philosophical perspectives on the politics of Artificial Intelligence. The final part of the paper gives an evaluation and conclusion respectively.

Defining the Politics of Artificial Intelligence

In the context this paper, artificial intelligence (AI) denotes a sophisticated array of computer technologies engineered to replicate human intelligence, encompassing learning, reasoning, decision-making, and problem-solving, which progressively mould political frameworks, affect governance, transform power relations, and provoke essential enquiries regarding autonomy, control, and accountability in the digital era. The politics of Artificial Intelligence talks about how AI tech shapes and gets shaped by power structures, governance, and social relationships. AI is not just a neutral tool - it reflects the values, beliefs, and goals of the people who make and use it.¹ Humans create AI systems, and they can't help but put their own biases into them, which can cause unfair results. Also, a few big global players often control AI development, which makes people worry about who's in charge. Once again, AI politics deals with the back-and-forth between power, control, governance, and how society feels about making, using, and setting rules for AI tech.

It covers how AI systems have an impact on political structures economic systems social relations, and ethical considerations while looking into who gains from AI, who gets left out or pushed aside, and how people make choices about AI. The politics of AI is

a complex area that involves many different groups such as governments, companies, researchers, and civil society, each with their own goals and plans.

Historicizing the Politics of Artificial Intelligence

The development of AI in itself is very much entangled with political, social, and ethical considerations thus, it started engaging in a long history. In conceptual terms, AI can trace its origin to ancient times when myths and works of philosophy created the imagination of artificial beings; in modern times, its development began in the 20th century. Still, the political roles of AI appeared much later, and only recently took centre stage as the technology matured and its capabilities expanded. The concept of machines mimicking human intelligence has existed since the dawn of civilization. In Greek mythology, for instance, one could find tales about man-made creatures, like Talos, a gigantic automaton constructed from bronze that was programmed to guard the island of Crete.² The consideration of these early thoughts about AI introduces the perpetuity and proximity of humanity to the creation of life through technology. Intellectuals like Descartes and Hobbes proclaimed a mechanistic theory on human beings during the Enlightenment era; therefore, this could also mean that intelligence could artificially be reproduced. Indeed, Hobbes went to the extent of creating his magnum opus *Leviathan*, wherein he came up with a theory stating that the reasoning of humans could well be described as arithmetic, which became a forerunner to later AI theory creations.³

Real development of AI as a discipline started in the mid-20th century. Alan Turing can be considered the father of AI because he proposed an idea of a machine that would think like the human mind. Turing, in his paper "Computing Machinery and

¹ Nick Bostrom, *Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies*. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2014): 29

² Michael Smith, *Mythology and the Machine: From Talos to Turing*. (Routledge, 2017): 24

³ Matthew Jones, *Descartes' Machine Metaphor: Politics and Ideas in the Seventeenth Century*. (Harvard UP, 1997): 67

Intelligence,” proposed a test, a standard against which to measure whether a machine could give evidence of intelligent behaviour that would be indistinguishable from that of human.⁴ The implications of this idea immediately congealed into early political debates about how such intelligent machines might impact society. AI research became a formal discipline at the beginning of the mid-1950s. It was then that a group of scientists like John McCarthy, Marvin Minsky, and Claude Shannon held what has become to be called the Dartmouth Conference in 1956. This event is generally known as the official birth of AI as a field. These early AI pioneers were largely driven by the idea that it would be possible to build machines that think, reason, and solve problems as would human beings do thus, the early artificial intelligence, New Frontier kind of thinking. The era did bring political concerns, though, starting from the level of job automation to overall economic and social impacts of AI technologies.⁵

By the 1970s and 1980s, however, some of the initial optimism that was related to AI began to wear off. The so-called “AI Winter” was characterized by a lack of progress within the AI research area and a lack of funding due to unrealized expectations. This partly came about with the political and economic realities of the time. The governments and private investors became more circumspect in their dealings with the realization full well that these grand visions of fully autonomous, intelligent machines were actually quite far from being realized.⁶ The AI Winter finally thawed in the 1990s and early 2000s, when advances in computing power, algorithmic techniques, and data availability began to breathe new life into the field. AI’s resurgence also brought renewed political interest, as its

commercial applications, machine learning and natural language processing most obviously had real economic import. The field has become further politicized with the rise to prominence of technology giants such as Google, Amazon, and Facebook, whose reliance on AI technologies brings a host of social issues regarding data privacy, labour displacement, and algorithmic bias.⁷

By the 2010s, AI had become a central issue in global politics. The rapid development of AI technologies particularly in the areas of face recognition, autonomous vehicles, and predictive analytics led to growing concerns about surveillance, discrimination, and the erosion of civil liberties.⁸ For this reason, different governments around the world started instituting regulations on these issues, including the landmark European Union’s General Data Protection Regulation-or GDPR-which had the aim of protecting individuals against AI-driven surveillance and data exploitation. Besides that, AI has also become a crucial fighting field in the worldwide race for technological dominance, especially between the United States and China. Both countries take AI as an integral component of their national strategies and are hugely investing in research and development just to ensure their dominance in the field. This has created huge apprehension about a new form of “AI arms race” and its possible consequences for global security and economic power. At this very moment, ethical debates concerning the use of AI in warfare for developing autonomous weapons are an overwhelming political concern on the international stage.⁹

Interrogating the Politics of Artificial Intelligence: A Philosopher’s View

A philosophical interrogation of the politics

⁴ Alan Turing, “Computing Machinery and Intelligence” *Mind*, vol. 59, no. 236, (1950): 433-460.

⁵ Stan Franklin, *Artificial Minds* (MIT Press, 1995): 89

⁶ Margaret Boden, *AI: Its Nature and Future*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016): 56

⁷ Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*. Public Affairs, (2019): 344

⁸ Frank Pasquale, *The Black Box Society: The Secret Algorithms That Control Money and Information*. (London: Harvard UP, 2015): 98

⁹ P.W. Singer, *Wired for War: The Robotics Revolution and Conflict in the 21st Century*. (Penguin Press, 2009):76

of AI would have to grapple with basic questions, such as those dealing with the aspect of power, control, ethics, and the social effect that AI technologies produce. These would, in turn, enable us to perceive how AI influences and is influenced by political structures, besides furnishing a framework to critique its role in shaping human societies. Critical theory, especially coming from those such as Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and Jürgen Habermas, turn their critical eye to the issue of how technologies, including AI, reinforce power relations and ideological domination. AI is not neutral; it serves the masters' interests: the governments, the corporations and the political elites. In this respect, AI systems reflect and reinforce existing inequalities; notably, they marginalize the so-called vulnerable groups through biased algorithms and systems of surveillance. According to such theorists, AI systems can be considered as an instrument of domination created via a concentration of power in the hands of corporations and states that use AI systems to monitor and manipulate the populations. This goes to the very use of AI in predictive policing, targeted advertising, and mass surveillance as mechanisms of control. Habermas' focus on The public sphere as a space for rational discourse is relevant here. Media platforms powered by AI distort this public sphere through misinformation and political polarization through algorithms that put engagement over truth.

A Marxist analysis of AI uncovers a profound interconnection between technical progress and the exploitative mechanisms of capitalism. From this viewpoint, the advancement and implementation of AI are not neutral or solely innovative endeavours; instead, they are propelled by the profit maximisation imperatives inherent in capitalism systems. This profit-centric approach frequently leads to the alienation of the working class, as the wealth produced by AI technology accumulates within a select few specifically, dominant tech

businesses and wealthy nations thereby exacerbating existing class disparities. Automation driven by artificial intelligence displaces labour from the industrial process, exacerbating unemployment and economic inequality. Labour becomes further estranged from workers as AI systems usurp tasks that were once manifestations of human effort and expertise. This results in an intensified kind of alienation, as workers cease to be active participants in production and instead become passive witnesses of automated processes governed by others. From a Marxist perspective, the alienation linked to AI transcends the economic domain. It infiltrates social life, as surveillance technologies and algorithmic decision-making systems alienate individuals and influence behaviour to benefit corporate interests. This electronic control perpetuates existing power dynamics and exacerbates individuals' disconnection from community, autonomy, and substantive engagement in social and economic life. Consequently, AI within capitalism functions not merely as an instrument of innovation, but as a means of heightened exploitation and systemic control.¹⁰ The gig economy, enabled by AI-driven platforms like Uber and Amazon Mechanical Turk, exemplifies how artificial intelligence amplifies labour exploitation within modern capitalism. In these arrangements, employees are frequently denied equitable compensation.¹¹

The unregulated extraction of data from communities in the Global South for AI system training without their consent, oversight, or remuneration constitutes a modern type of resource exploitation. This is not innovation; it is digital appropriation masquerading as advancement. AI technologies are often implemented in underdeveloped nations without adequate regard for local contexts, histories, or cultural frameworks. In this process, they perpetuate reliance and reinforce structural inequities under the pretence of modernisation. AI is not neutral or

¹⁰ Nick Couldry, and Ulises A. Mejias. *The Costs of Connection: How Data Is Colonizing Human Life and Appropriating It for Capitalism*. (California: Stanford University, Press, 2019): 73

¹¹ Nick Couldry, and Ulises A. Mejias, Ibid (2019): 965

generally advantageous; rather, it is evolving into a technology of hegemony engineered, possessed, and regulated by the Global North, with the Global South serving as its experimental ground and data repository. The intellectual foundation of contemporary AI ethics further reveals this disparity. Predominantly influenced by Western intellectual traditions especially utilitarian and libertarian frameworks, these ethical standards frequently overlook or diminish the values, moral intuitions, and social structures of non-Western countries. This exclusion sustains an epistemic hierarchy that renders the Global South silent in shaping the paths of technological growth that significantly affect its populace. The outcome is a worldwide imbalance of power and authority, digital colonialism disguised as moral advancement.

From a feminist ethics-of-care viewpoint, this course of AI development is not merely reckless but inherently unjust. The ethics of care vehemently criticises the absence of empathy, relationality, and attentiveness in contemporary AI design methodologies. Technologies intended to enhance life for all actually exacerbate discrimination, exclusion, and harm especially for those already marginalised: women, people of colour, Indigenous communities, and economically poor groups. The biases inherent in AI systems are not coincidental; they directly mirror the societal and institutional prejudices ingrained in the datasets utilised for training these systems. The significant inaccuracy of facial recognition systems in identifying women and individuals of colour, as opposed to white men, constitutes not merely a technological deficiency but an ethical shortcoming. It demonstrates a profound contempt for the dignity and safety of marginalised communities. The ethics of care necessitates a profound re-evaluation of AI development, emphasising inclusiveness, shared accountability, and fairness. This necessitates participatory design procedures wherein individuals most impacted by AI systems are regarded not as

passive users of technology, but as equal co-creators and decision-makers. Their voices, requirements, and lived experiences must influence the fundamental structure and administration of AI. Moreover, from a deontological perspective grounded on the Kantian moral framework, the development of AI must adhere to immutable ideals of human dignity, autonomy, and respect. No individual should ever be regarded solely as a means to an end, whether it is for profit, efficiency, or technological acclaim. The development and implementation of AI technology must be rooted in ethical obligations that recognise the inherent value of each individual. Anything less is not only ethically inadequate but also a violation of the fundamental values upon which just society should be established. A comprehensive examination of AI necessitates more than mere technical audits and theoretical ideas. It advocates for a decolonised, inclusive, and justice-centric ethical framework, one that rejects the marginalisation of the many for the advantage of the few.¹²

Utilitarianism, as a consequentialist ethical theory, addresses the issue of AI by posing a seemingly straightforward question: does it advance the greatest benefit for the greatest number? Initially, this seems practical and ethically justifiable. However, a more profound examination uncovers the significant pressure imposed on AI systems to provide social benefits while alleviating systemic disadvantages. Utilitarians would endorse the implementation of AI to the extent that it clearly augments collective welfare by enhancing healthcare results, boosting economic production, or facilitating access to vital services. This endorsement is not without conditions. The framework necessitates thorough examination of any negative repercussions escalating unemployment, digital monitoring, algorithmic inequity, or the deterioration of privacy and civil liberties. Utilitarianism, when accurately understood, necessitates more than a cursory cost-benefit analysis. It requires that these costs and

¹²Luciano Floridi, *The Ethics of Information*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013): 121

benefits be allocated fairly and that adverse effects do not disproportionately impact vulnerable communities. A critical utilitarian perspective on AI dismisses techno-utopianism that lauds innovation without considering the associated costs borne by individuals. It advocates for policies that actively disperse the advantages of AI to the widest segment of mankind, rather than consolidating power and wealth among a few group of global technology elites. The stakes are significant: for AI to be justified from a utilitarian perspective, it must promote the common good rather than exacerbate societal stratification in the name of “progress.”

Shifting to phenomenology, especially through Martin Heidegger’s perspective, the critique transcends outcome-based ethics to examine the fundamental structure of human existence in relation to technology. In this context, AI is not simply a neutral instrument to be employed for beneficial or detrimental purposes. It is a method of disclosure, a metamorphosis of our existence inside the world. Heidegger’s concept of *Gestell*, or “enframing,” is essential. It delineates how contemporary technology, encompassing AI, structures reality as an entity to be organised, regulated, and utilised. Human beings are increasingly perceived not as intrinsic goals, but as data points/resources to be optimised by autonomous intelligent systems.

From this perspective, AI not only transforms our labour and processes but also undermines our fundamental sense of agency and being. In essential sectors like healthcare, law enforcement, education, and employment, decision-making is being assigned to robots whose mechanisms are obscure and lack accountability. The subsequent developments represent not only a technical transformation but an existential one. Human experience is reduced to measurements; our narratives are supplanted by scores; our moral agency is usurped by computers. We are entering an era where decisions are made on our behalf

occasionally in lieu of our own agency by entities that we neither comprehend nor govern. Phenomenologists warn that in this AI-saturated reality, humanity risks disconnecting from the profundity of its own life. We jeopardise the formation of a world in which lived experience is subordinated to datafication, rendering human significance peripheral. The inquiry thus transitions from “What can AI accomplish for us?” to “What impact is AI having on us?” Moreover, a more urgent inquiry arises: “What do we become when we relinquish our discernment, our connections, and our destinies to machines?” Within both the utilitarian and phenomenological frameworks, AI is not a neutral entity. It is a force that necessitates ethical contemplation, political awareness, and intellectual profundity. In a world coexisting with AI, human values, autonomy, and dignity must be safeguarded and prioritised. Any outcome inferior than this is not advancement; it is capitulation.

The Future of Africa in the age of Artificial Intelligence

In exploring the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in shaping Africa’s future, this paper delves into both its potential benefits and the political obstacles that AI technologies present within the African landscape. This encompasses the possibility that AI could help mitigate enduring socio-economic challenges or, conversely, exacerbate existing disparities, depending on the governance frameworks established. AI is often regarded as a transformative force capable of making substantial contributions to various sectors such as healthcare, agriculture, education and urban planning throughout the continent. Scholars contend that the implementation of AI could enhance healthcare services; for example, by increasing diagnostic precision and improving access to medical care in rural communities.¹³ Similarly, AI has the potential to bolster precision agriculture, a domain that depends on predictive analytics

¹³ Rachel Smith, *Agricultural Innovation and Food Security in Sub-Saharan Africa*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019): 12

to optimize crop yields in areas where food security remains a pressing concern.¹⁴

The successful integration of these technologies is, however, contingent upon effective governance and policy-making, a task that can pose significant challenges. The political dimensions surrounding AI deployment in Africa are particularly intricate, primarily because of the global disparity in AI expertise, infrastructure and resource accessibility. African nations frequently depend on technologies that originate in the Global North, which often do not align with the unique needs and values of African communities.¹⁵ Critics argue that this dependence on foreign technology could potentially reinforce Africa's subordinate position in the global economy, thereby making the continent increasingly vulnerable to external pressures regarding its domestic policies on data protection, privacy and economic sovereignty.¹⁶ Moreover, there are significant concerns regarding algorithmic biases embedded within AI systems, which could perpetuate stereotypes and exacerbate inequalities in societies that are already grappling with discrimination and social divisions.¹⁷ Because of the vast diversity among African countries, it is essential to establish inclusive AI governance that accurately reflects the continent's socio-political realities. Policy-makers and scholars highlight the necessity of nurturing local AI talent and promoting indigenous technological innovation to foster sustainable and equitable AI development in Africa.¹⁸

In order to tackle these challenges, a

multi-stakeholder approach (which includes African governments, private sector innovators and civil society groups) is essential. Such collaborative frameworks can help construct regulatory environments that safeguard the continent's interests and promote AI for social good.¹⁹ As Africa navigates the politics of AI, policies focusing on ethical AI usage, infrastructural investment and data sovereignty will be pivotal in shaping a future that harnesses AI's benefits while minimizing its risks. However, this journey will require a concerted effort from all parties involved, because without their engagement, progress may be stunted. Although the path ahead may be fraught with challenges, the potential rewards are significant.

Evaluation/Conclusion

From the foregoing, this paper has attempted an interrogation of the politics of Artificial intelligence, it is worthy of note that, in as much as there are bad sides to the politics of Artificial intelligence, there are also positive gains to it. The politics of Artificial Intelligence is a complex, evolving field that covers issues related to the economy, ethics, and global governance. In the context of the most relevant political debates concerning AI, one of the most mentioned political questions has to do with the impact AI has on the labour market. As AI technologies continue to advance, job automation within sectors like manufacturing, transportation, and retail presents significant challenges for governments the world over. Automation promises efficiency and growth but in turn

¹⁴ Terry Jones and Ramesh Kumar. "Precision Agriculture and Food Security in Sub-Saharan Africa." *Journal of Agricultural Science*, vol. 29, no. 3, (2019): 45-60.

¹⁵ Funmi Adegboye, *Artificial Intelligence and Africa's Dependency on Global Technologies*. (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 2020): 67

¹⁶ Chinedu Okeke and Tendai Moyo. *Technology and the Politics of Global Dependency*. (Nairobi: African Research Institute, 2021): 89

¹⁷ Jonathan Taylor, "Algorithmic Fairness and Social Impact in African Contexts." *Journal of Ethical AI*, vol. 5, no. 2, (2020): 100-13.

¹⁸ Achille Mbembe, "Education and the Future of AI Talent in Africa." *African Studies Quarterly*, vol. 12, no. 1, (2021): 50-60.

¹⁹ Tayo Ogundele, "Building Sustainable AI Frameworks in Developing Nations." *Global Policy Journal*, vol. 12, no. 4, (2021): 73-80.

threatens to render millions of workers redundant, even as it exacerbates income inequality and leads to possible social unrest. Therefore, the politics here are around how this economic restructuring will be managed by the governments, protection of workers' rights, and an increasingly automated future.

Another critical political issue refers to AI's role in surveillance and data privacy. Facially recognition technological devices and data analytics are emerging as tools for governments and corporations to monitor populations, raising crucial questions about privacy and civil liberties. In more authoritarian states, AI is likely to be used for social control that ultimately serves to further erode democratic freedoms. Democratic governments, on the other hand, have to balance their security imperatives with the protection of rights for their population. Certain regions for example, the European Union with its General Data Protection Regulation demonstrate how some try to rein in AI data collection practices to protect privacy. The politics of AI in this regard would revolve around striking the right balance between innovation, security, and individual freedoms.

AI also outperforms expectations in global geopolitics, especially the rivalry between world superpowers like the United States and China. Both countries regard AI as a crucial strategic asset, and the effort toward developing better AI technologies opened a new frontier in international competition. This competition shapes not only economic policy but also military strategy, given that AI-powered systems reshape modern warfare, including autonomous weapons. This is already a very deep political implication, in that it raises questions on global security, international cooperation, and the need for regulations which can prevent destabilization of geopolitical power structures. Further complicating the political dimensions of the issue is the ethics of AI decision-making in governance: AI systems that are used by governments to automate decision-making processes often pertain to sensitive fields of health care, criminal justice, and social services, raising a separate set of concerns

related to bias, transparency, and accountability. Without oversight on AI algorithms-especially when life decisions are contingent upon them-one may face possible discrimination and injustice. Governance in AI, therefore, is encumbered by the politics that involve the need for sound regulatory frameworks which can assure fairness and protect against abuses in AI systems.

Finally, there is the political concern with AI about the environmental impact. This includes energy consumption to power technologies in AI, mainly from data centres and machine learning models, which have become important contributors to environmental degradation. With governments and corporations continuing to push for more innovation in AI, one of the important political questions will pertain to how technological advancement is to be balanced with environmental sustainability in light of this fact. This therefore calls for the policymakers to consider the carbon footprints that AI leaves behind and work towards more sustainable AI practices. This would then, inversely make the environmental implications of AI a key point of its politics.

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