

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE SURVIVAL OF DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA: NAVIGATING OPPORTUNITIES, RISKS, AND IMPERATIVES

By

Elizabeth Titilayo Aduloju

Department of Pastoral/Communication Studies,
Catholic Institute of West Africa,
Port Harcourt, River State, Nigeria.
Email: t.aduloju@ciwa.edu.ng

Abstract

The advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI) presents a transformative force with profound implications for democratic governance worldwide. AI and democracy are two prominent issues that have global relevance today. One is a technological innovation that foretells intelligent prediction machines' great potential and possible risks. The other is a form of government that builds on and encourages participation. Of course, AI's development can potentially revolutionise various aspects of human life, including politics and governance. However, the rapid advancement of AI also poses significant threats to democracy, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria. As Africa's most populous nation, Nigeria is at a crossroads where the integration of AI into its political and civic landscape has the potential to strengthen democratic institutions or exacerbate them. Thus, this paper argues that comprehensive regulatory frameworks

must accompany AI development in Nigeria to prevent democratic erosion while ensuring that AI is used for the common good and interest. Utilising a conceptual analytical approach, the paper critically examines the opportunities, risks, and imperatives associated with AI's increasing role in Nigerian democracy. It also investigates the threats posed by misinformation, algorithmic bias and the potential for manipulating public opinion. Findings indicate that a multidisciplinary approach to AI development in Nigeria is necessary, prioritising human rights, transparency, and accountability. It concludes that if these strategies are implemented, the country's democracy will be stable and attractive, facilitating the advancement of AI, as its gains will be optimised and the fears of its risks minimised.

Keywords: Algorithmic, Artificial Intelligence, Democracy, Governance, Misinformation, Regulatory Frameworks,

Introduction

The advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI) marks a pivotal moment in human history, presenting a transformative force with profound implications that extend across various facets of society, including democratic governance worldwide. In contemporary global discourse, AI and democracy are two issues of paramount relevance. AI, a technological innovation, heralds immense potential alongside inherent risks associated with intelligent prediction machines. Conversely, democracy, as a form of government, thrives on and actively encourages participation from its citizenry. The rapid development of AI holds the promise of revolutionising numerous aspects of human life, from daily routines to complex political and governance structures. Its data analysis, automation, and predictive modelling capabilities offer unprecedented

opportunities for enhancing efficiency, improving public services, and fostering innovation across diverse sectors.¹ While the global landscape grapples with the integration of AI, its rapid advancement also poses significant threats to democratic principles, particularly in developing countries such as Nigeria. As Africa's most populous nation, Nigeria finds itself at a critical juncture where integrating AI into its political and civic landscape could bolster its democratic institutions or exacerbate existing vulnerabilities. With over 220 million people and projections suggesting that its population will double by 2050, the country holds what should be an enviable demographic advantage.² The nation's unique socio-political dynamics and burgeoning digital transformation make it a compelling case study for examining the intricate interplay between AI and democratic survival. "The challenges observed in the 2023 Nigerian elections, including issues like ballot box theft, result manipulation, and the spread of misinformation, underscore the urgent need for impartial and robust systems, which AI could potentially provide."³ However, excitement about technological advancements needs to be balanced with a thorough awareness of the dangers, like algorithmic bias and public opinion manipulation, which could jeopardise the democratic ideals AI is meant to uphold.

This present article posits that for AI development in Nigeria to contribute to democratic resilience and progress genuinely, it must be meticulously accompanied by comprehensive regulatory frameworks. These frameworks are crucial not only to prevent the erosion of democratic norms and institutions but also to ensure that AI technologies are harnessed for the Nigerian populace's common good and collective interest. Without such deliberate and foresightful governance, the risks

associated with AI, particularly in a complex democratic environment like Nigeria, could outweigh its potential benefits, leading to unintended consequences that destabilise rather than strengthen democratic foundations. Thus, how we handle this technological behemoth may now determine whether our democracy, which we have so fiercely valued and fought for, survives at all. This is not merely an academic argument but a real, urgent issue requiring prompt and careful action.⁴

Utilising a conceptual analytical approach, this paper critically examines the multifaceted opportunities, inherent risks, and indispensable imperatives associated with AI's escalating role in Nigerian democracy. The analysis delves into the specific threats posed by the pervasive spread of misinformation and disinformation, the insidious nature of algorithmic bias, and the alarming potential for the manipulation of public opinion through AI-driven tools. By dissecting these elements, the article aims to provide a holistic understanding of the challenges, prospects and imperatives necessary for the survival of democracy in Nigeria. To map out these vital imperatives, we must wisely navigate this technological frontier so that AI can be a potent instrument for advancing democracy rather than undermining it. Thus, the findings suggest that a multidisciplinary approach to AI development in Nigeria is not merely beneficial but essential, one that unequivocally prioritises human rights, champions transparency, and enforces accountability across all stages of AI design, deployment, and governance.

Concept and Definition of Artificial Intelligence

As information and communication technologies (ICTs) have rapidly advanced, the term '*artificial*' has garnered increasing attention, particularly concerning artificial intelligence (AI). Literally, '*artificial*' stands in contrast to

'natural', and this dichotomy has shaped much of the discourse surrounding AI. Natural intelligence refers to the cognitive abilities that arise organically through the biological evolution of humans and animals, abilities such as learning, reasoning, adapting, and problem-solving. In contrast, artificial intelligence is a constructed form of intelligence, designed and embedded within inanimate entities like computers, robots, or algorithms. It is not a product of organic evolution but human ingenuity and technological engineering.⁵ This distinction is not merely semantic; it reflects deeper philosophical and scientific debates about the nature of intelligence itself. While natural intelligence is shaped by millions of years of evolutionary pressures, artificial intelligence is shaped by design goals, data inputs, and computational architectures. As AI systems become increasingly sophisticated, the boundary between the artificial and the natural becomes more blurred, prompting questions about autonomy, consciousness, and ethical responsibility.⁶

Regarding the evolution of AI, there remains no singular or universally accepted narrative among AI researchers and communication scholars. The field is marked by competing paradigms, ranging from symbolic AI and machine learning to neural networks and cognitive architectures. These divergent approaches reflect differing assumptions about how intelligence should be modelled and replicated. Consequently, the trajectory of AI development is both complex and contentious, shaped by interdisciplinary tensions, technological breakthroughs, and societal expectations.⁷ However, the academic result of the Dartmouth College conference in 1956 is artificial intelligence. It all began in the 20th century, when academics like Alan Turing and John von Neumann promoted debates about information theory and computer

science. Inaku Egere states, "John McCarthy coined 'artificial intelligence' at the Dartmouth conference in 1956, making it an official academic discipline. Alger Fraley, an expert in Artificial Intelligence and Generative AI, avers that "a focus on symbolic reasoning and logic characterised the early days of AI. Researchers aimed to create intelligent systems by encoding human knowledge through rules and symbols."⁸ Similarly, scholars have not generally accepted a definition of artificial intelligence. This has led some authors to approach the concept negatively by defining what AI is not. For Luciano Floridi, "AI is not about reproducing any kind of biological intelligence. It is about doing without it."⁹

Given that humans exert control over their environment mainly due to the superior intelligence they possess compared to other species. Stuart Russell argues that intelligence is a fundamental aspect of human nature.¹⁰ Moreover, Jeff Hawkins emphasises that "it becomes easier to understand the widespread fascination with AI technology."¹¹ This fascination is deeply tied to the revolutionary implications of Alan Turing's question, "Can machines think?" posed in his 1950 paper *Computing Machinery and Intelligence*.¹² Thus, when Fouad Sabry defines AI as the creation of intelligent systems that can perceive their surroundings and carry out tasks independently of human intervention, it becomes easier to understand the myths surrounding AI, such as concerns about job displacement or the possibility of a technological singularity.¹³ Erik J. Larson critiques these myths, warning that such beliefs often overstate AI's capabilities and misrepresent its limitations.¹⁴

AI can generally be understood both as a discipline and as a technological artefact. As a field of study, John McCarthy famously defines AI as "the science and

engineering of making intelligent machines, especially intelligent computer programmes."¹⁵ This definition has been widely cited and elaborated upon by scholars who emphasise its foundational role in conceptualising AI as both a scientific and engineering pursuit. On the other hand, AI is also described as "a generic term that refers to any machine or algorithm that is capable of observing its environment, learning, and, based on the knowledge and experience gained, taking intelligent action or proposing a decision."¹⁶

John Angus Scantling adds another dimension by framing AI as "the development and deployment of computer systems capable of performing tasks that typically require human intelligence. These tasks include problem-solving, decision-making, speech recognition, language translation, and image recognition."¹⁷ Drawing from Robert J. Sternberg's definition of human intelligence, the essence of intelligence can be itemised as follows: (a) it involves content and processing, (b) it builds from learning and experience, (c) it is adaptive in function, and (d) it is orientated toward problem-solving.¹⁸ In this light, AI represents the externalisation of human cognitive capacity into machines. Data serves as the content, which is then processed to produce results. Machine learning focuses on building and updating this data, while general data processing is directed toward executing specific tasks. These tasks can be governance-related. In democratic nations like Nigeria, AI technology holds the potential to play a transformative role in strengthening civic institutions and democratic processes.

The Notion of Democracy

Plato's political philosophy offers profound insight into the meaning of democracy, regardless of the diverse forms it has taken across nations. Plato famously defined

democracy as “a charming form of government full of variety and disorder, and dispensing a sort of equality to equals and unequals alike.”¹⁹ A definition that continues to fuel enduring debates about the nature of democracy and the criteria by which it should be evaluated in contemporary society. His depiction of democracy as attractive and chaotic resonates with modern democratic experiences, where inclusivity and unpredictability often coexist. This philosophical perspective finds empirical support in the results of a poll conducted by Afrobarometer, which revealed that two-thirds of respondents across 36 African countries preferred democracy over other forms of government.²⁰ Such widespread appeal may be attributed to democracy’s defining feature: the provision of a form of equality to all individuals. This notion reflects a broader interpretation of human freedom, wherein every citizen receives fundamental social recognition and support from the state, regardless of gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity, or religion. Consequently, democracy fosters the active participation of all citizens in essential political processes, including elections and governance. It is this inclusive character that continues to make democracy a compelling and aspirational model of government for many societies around the world.

However, some scholars see democracy as a form of government that does not promise a predetermined outcome but one that lends itself to a “socially desirable and imaginary future.”²¹ Democracy is, therefore, a political process that is expected to evolve in Nigeria toward the realisation of socially desirable ideals, including free and fair elections, active citizen participation, functional institutions, and authentic, sustainable national development. These democratic

aspirations are not merely procedural but foundational to governance's legitimacy and effectiveness. However, democracy can devolve into a mere ritual in specific contexts, losing its substantive meaning and transformative potential.²² This notion underscores the risk of democratic formalism, where the outward forms of democracy persist without genuine engagement or institutional integrity.

In Nigeria, rather than moving towards free and fair elections, equality of socio-economic and political opportunities for all citizens and human freedom, as Toyin Falola observes, the political atmosphere in the country is marked with tensions, inequalities, etc., occasioned by political parties that are aligned towards ethnic lines. He goes further to say that each of these political groups “served its ethnic constituents, and none fought for Nigeria’s overall interests.”²³ This is a good image of illusory democracy, where some citizens suffer gross inequality, injustice, and exclusion in a democratic government. Mills, Obasanjo, Biti, and Herbst's definition of democracy highlights many important elements that entice people to adopt a democratic form of government. According to their view, democracy is “a system where there is universal adult suffrage, where voting is free and fair, the outcome of which reflects the people’s choice, and there is a set of supporting institutions and freedoms.”²⁴ Moreover, participation and representation are essential for an effective democratic government. In a densely populated country like Nigeria, representation is one practical way of realising democratic participation.

Artificial Intelligence Development in Nigeria

AI has emerged as one of the most transformative technologies of the 21st century, reshaping industries, governance, and societal interactions. While much of the

global discourse centres on developments in North America, Europe, and Asia, Africa is increasingly becoming a fertile ground for AI innovation. Nigeria, often dubbed the "giant of Africa", is at the forefront of this movement, leveraging its youthful population, growing tech ecosystem, and strategic policy initiatives to position itself as a regional leader in AI development. Over the past decade, AI technology has evolved rapidly, producing models capable of executing complex tasks quickly.²⁵ Scholars such as Eke, Wakunuma, and Akintoye note that "AI as a tool or system that performs a specific intelligent task is growing and thriving in Africa,"²⁶ a statement that resonates strongly with Nigeria's progress. Citing its pioneering establishment of the National Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics (NCAIR) and the formation of a youth-led team dedicated to AI research, Effoduh describes Nigeria as "an artificial intelligence champion on the African continent."²⁷

In addition to institutional efforts, Nigeria has made significant legislative strides. The Nigeria Data Protection Act, 2023, provides a legal framework for safeguarding personal data and establishes the Nigeria Data Protection Commission.²⁸ This act complements earlier efforts such as the Nigeria Data Protection Regulation (NDPR) and the work of the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), which together create a robust foundation for ethical AI deployment. These initiatives reflect Nigeria's commitment to building a responsible and inclusive AI ecosystem. However, they also mark the beginning of a longer technological journey. As public expectations rise, the pressure mounts on institutions to deliver AI solutions that not only drive innovation but also uphold democratic values and promote sustainable development.

Opportunities of AI Development and Democracy in Nigeria

Although artificial intelligence is still a relatively new topic in Nigeria, there has been a noticeable change in awareness, funding, and application in recent years. Nigeria's entrepreneurs, researchers, policymakers, and investors have started investigating how intelligent technologies may solve regional issues and promote equitable economic growth and electoral processes, motivated by global advancements and a growing understanding of AI's revolutionary potential. For instance, the Nigerian government has started some programmes that encourage capacity-building and innovation. These include the National Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics (NCAIR) and the Nigeria Artificial Intelligence Research Scheme (NAIRS), which offer financial support, infrastructure, and technical assistance for AI-driven initiatives. The government most recently released its National AI Strategy, outlining a plan for using AI to boost social inclusion, increase economic competitiveness, and position Nigeria as a leader in technological innovation.²⁹ In Nigeria, the strategic deployment of AI holds immense promise for strengthening democratic resilience, particularly in a context marked by electoral challenges, institutional inefficiencies, and civic disengagement. The following are the benefits of AI

Credible Elections: Ethnic tensions, irregularities, and widespread litigation have often marred elections in Nigeria. Utilisation of AI, therefore, may offer a data-driven approach to electoral processes, enhancing transparency and reducing fraud. Technologies such as biometric verification, electronic voting systems, and real-time monitoring can legitimise the delegation of power from citizens to elected officials. Bala and Ahmed's study

on the 2015 general elections highlights the positive impact of electronic devices in promoting democratic development.³⁰

Vibrant Media and Free Expression: A vibrant media landscape is essential for democratic societies, enabling free expression and informed citizen participation. AI enhances this by managing vast information flows and facilitating communication across diverse platforms. It acts both as a channel and an agent of communication, amplifying voices and enabling real-time interaction.³¹ Also, AI generative tools, such as natural language processing and content recommendation systems, support media freedom and help counter political intimidation. Natale emphasises the transformative role of AI in human communication and its potential to democratise information access,³² in a country like Nigeria.

Effective Governance and Service Delivery: In Nigeria, ongoing discussions around the digital economy and e-governance legislation reflect a growing interest in leveraging AI for people-orientated policies and administrative efficiency. AI technologies offer unprecedented opportunities for improving governance and public service delivery. Smart systems such as chatbots and virtual assistants extend government services beyond traditional working hours, increasing accessibility and responsiveness. Loukis et al. argue that AI enables more dynamic e-governance, fostering better interaction between citizens and state institutions.³³

Citizen Participation and Inclusivity: AI expands the scope of citizen participation in democratic processes through digital platforms, smart devices, and automated systems. It enables real-time feedback, public opinion polling, and sentiment analysis, allowing governments to

understand better and respond to citizen needs. Moreover, AI-powered language translation tools promote inclusivity in Nigeria's culturally diverse society, ensuring that political communication reaches all linguistic groups.³⁴

Tackling Corruption: Corruption remains a significant impediment to democratic governance in Nigeria. AI's ability to analyse large datasets and detect patterns makes it a powerful tool in combating corruption. Predictive analytics and automated surveillance systems can identify irregularities, deter corrupt practices, and support prosecution efforts – the promise and perils of using artificial intelligence to fight corruption.

Risks of AI for the Survival to Nigerian Democracy

AI is a threat to democracies now, as it deals with the combined forces of foreign manipulation and internal degradation. It is no longer a problem of the future. Artificial intelligence is already being used to undermine democracies, sway public opinion, support authoritarian governments, and undermine diplomatic credibility all over the world. These dangers transcend national boundaries. According to recent DW research, AI-powered misinformation might cause elections in Africa to become unstable in the upcoming years. The stakes are high since elections are planned in 18 African nations between 2025 and 2026. One of the major arenas where the malicious use of AI will put democracy to the test is Africa.³⁵ The challenge for Nigeria, the most populous democracy in Africa, is not whether artificial intelligence will influence our political and social lives but rather how we will manage AI so that it enhances rather than weakens our democracy. Oshodi says, "In Nigeria's 2023 elections, deepfakes and coordinated disinformation campaigns flooded social media, fuelling polarisation and public

scepticism about democratic institutions. This is not a uniquely Nigerian problem but a global trend."³⁶ According to a 2024 Institute for Security + Technology analysis, AI-powered misinformation tactics are increasingly commonplace, with clear repercussions for voter turnout and election integrity.³⁷ Some of the risks of AI to the survival of democracy in Nigeria are:

Misinformation and Disinformation: The proliferation of misinformation and disinformation, often amplified by AI-driven algorithms, poses one of the most immediate and pervasive threats to Nigerian democracy. Social media platforms have become primary sources of information for many Nigerians, but they are also fertile ground for the rapid spread of false and misleading content. For instance, the 2023 elections witnessed the circulation of deepfake videos and synthetic audio recordings that falsely attributed inflammatory statements to political figures, exacerbating ethnic and religious tensions. These manipulations, often indistinguishable from authentic content, can mislead voters and incite unrest. Even for the 2027 elections, Haruna Chiroma already warns that “unscrupulous political actors... can exploit these tools in 2027 to fabricate and incite events that never transpired.”³⁸

Electoral System Vulnerability: Nigeria's election infrastructure is directly at risk from AI-driven hacks. Autonomous attack systems with sophisticated machine learning capabilities can target electoral databases and interfere with voting procedures without human assistance. These assaults can overwhelm cybersecurity defences since they are hard to identify and can be carried out in large quantities. Given its current logistical difficulties, the Independent National Electoral

Commission (INEC) might not be able to handle such highly advanced electronic threats.³⁹

Manipulation of Public Perception: AI algorithms can be weaponised to manipulate public opinion through micro-targeted propaganda. Political actors may deploy bots and AI-generated content to flood social media with biased narratives, suppress dissent, or amplify polarising messages. This undermines informed civic participation and distorts the democratic process. As AI for Africa notes, “machines, not just politicians, [now] shape the outcome of elections”⁴⁰.

Erosion of Electoral Trust: There has been a significant drop in public trust in Nigeria's voting system. Voter turnout declined from 69% in 2003 to less than 27% in 2023.⁴¹ Misinformation produced by AI further erodes voters' trust and makes them doubt election results. Without strong digital literacy and media verification procedures, voters continue to be susceptible to manipulation, undermining the legitimacy of democratic institutions.

Lack of Trustworthiness and Transparency of AI: There are also concerns about AI's transparency and reliability. When used in delicate democratic processes like resource distribution or voter verification, AI systems have the potential to provide unfair or discriminatory results by reflecting biases in the data they are trained on.⁴² This issue is made worse by the absence of context-specific development standards for reliable AI applications, since there is still no practical monitoring and accountability for these algorithms.

Digital Manipulation and Security Threats: When AI technologies are used, civic space is susceptible to digital manipulation and limitation. Governments in many

African nations, including Nigeria, have used laws, internet shutdowns, and AI-driven surveillance to limit online civic space, which has a negative impact on press freedom and inclusive governance.⁴³ This makes it more difficult for residents to unite, interact, and participate in democratic activities. Another significant concern is security threats. The quick uptake of digital technology by these actors, particularly for propaganda or operational objectives, indicates an impending threat, even though the use of AI by extremist groups in Nigeria is still in its infancy. The foreign use of AI systems, such as military drones, may further complicate Nigeria's security and sovereignty.⁴⁴

Institutional and Regulatory Gaps: Of course, Nigeria's regulatory frameworks are still ill-equipped to govern AI's political applications. While the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) has launched a National AI Strategy, enforcement remains weak. The absence of clear legal boundaries allows political actors to exploit AI without accountability. As Kafilat Taiwo argues, "AI alone cannot safeguard democracy without inclusive growth, strong institutions, and citizen empowerment."⁴⁵

Imperatives in Navigating AI for Successful Democracy in Nigeria

To harness the opportunities and mitigate the risks of AI for the survival of democracy in Nigeria, a multi-pronged and proactive approach is imperative. This requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders: government, civil society, academia, the private sector, and international partners. These imperatives include, but are not limited to, the following:

i. Developing Robust Legal and Regulatory Frameworks

Establishing thorough legal and regulatory frameworks for AI – going beyond aspirational plans to actual, enforceable laws – is a fundamental necessity. Nigeria must expedite the creation and implementation of a strong AI governance law that adopts the risk-based methodology of the EU AI Act.⁴⁶ While Nigeria's 2024 National AI Strategy (NAIS) lays out a framework for ethical and responsible AI,⁴⁷ specific laws are required to ensure legal enforceability and address the unique difficulties posed by AI in developing nations. This framework should cover data security and privacy, algorithmic accountability and transparency, bias reduction, election-related AI regulation, surveillance-related AI, and cross-sectoral cooperation.

ii. Promoting Ethical AI Development and Deployment

Beyond legal frameworks, Nigeria must establish a robust ethical foundation to guide the responsible integration of artificial intelligence. This involves adopting national ethical guidelines that emphasise fairness, transparency, accountability, human oversight, privacy by design, and societal benefit. These principles should be embedded in a living document that evolves alongside technological advancements. Equally important is fostering inclusive dialogue. Platforms for ongoing engagement among AI developers, policymakers, civil society, and citizens, such as public forums, expert roundtables, and workshops, can help address ethical dilemmas and build consensus on responsible AI use.⁴⁸

iii. Investing in AI Infrastructure and Capacity Building

To harness AI's transformative potential, Nigeria must prioritise strategic investments in infrastructure and human capital. This comprehensive approach addresses the digital divide, fosters local innovation, and equips institutions and citizens for ethical and effective AI engagement. Expanding digital infrastructure is also foundational. Reliable internet access, affordable devices, and rural broadband initiatives are essential to democratise AI tools and ensure equitable participation across Nigeria.⁴⁹ Strengthening local research and development (R&D) is also critical. By building AI systems that reflect Nigeria's languages, values, and socio-political realities, the country can reduce dependence on foreign technologies and cultivate a skilled, ethical workforce.⁵⁰

iv. Nation-wide Promotion of Digital Literacy

Digital literacy must be elevated and promoted nationwide to achieve all the above. Programmes like NITDA's "Digital Literacy for All" and targeted civil servant training are commendable steps³ (NITDA, p. 45).⁵¹ Elizabeth T. Aduloju further emphasises the importance of integrating media literacy education into the formal curricula of the Nigerian educational system from primary to tertiary levels.⁵² She believes that this will help to prepare the Nigerian youth for the global tech economy, politics and governance. In addition, public institutions, including government agencies, INEC, and law enforcement, must be equipped with AI-related competencies. Training in cybersecurity, ethical regulation, and responsible deployment ensures that AI strengthens governance rather than undermines it.⁵³

v. Strengthening Civil Society and Media

Civil society organisations (CSOs) and independent media serve as vital watchdogs, advocates, and educators in the AI era. They are essential in promoting transparency, protecting rights, and equipping citizens to navigate the digital landscape responsibly. Supporting AI-powered fact-checking initiatives is a key priority. Media outlets and verification organisations must be resourced and trained to use AI tools effectively in combating misinformation and disinformation. This includes equipping journalists with skills in ethical reporting and algorithmic verification.⁵⁴

vi. Fostering International Cooperation

Given the global nature of artificial intelligence and its far-reaching implications, Nigeria must actively engage in international cooperation to build capacity, align with global standards, and address transnational threats. Collaborative efforts with international bodies such as the United Nations and the African Union are essential for sharing experiences, learning from best practices, and co-developing governance frameworks tailored to the realities of developing countries.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, strategic partnerships with global organisations, developed nations, and leading technology firms can accelerate Nigeria's AI readiness. These alliances should focus on infrastructural development, research support, human capital training, and technology transfer, ensuring that Nigeria benefits from global expertise while cultivating local innovation.⁵⁶

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is obvious that AI presents both a profound opportunity and a complex challenge for the survival of democracy in Nigeria. If strategically harnessed, AI can enhance governance by fostering transparent communication between the state and its citizens, streamlining public service delivery, and promoting

inclusive participation in democratic processes. However, realising these benefits demands more than technological adoption; it requires deliberate investment in digital infrastructure, ethical regulation, and human capacity. To safeguard democratic values, Nigeria must prioritise the development of AI systems that reflect its cultural and linguistic diversity, uphold human rights, and resist misuse by political or corporate interests. Strengthening civil society, empowering the media, and fostering international cooperation are equally vital to ensure accountability and resilience against AI-enabled threats. Ultimately, the promise of AI in Nigeria's democratic evolution hinges on patriotic leadership, robust institutions, and a shared commitment to equity, justice, and innovation. With the right frameworks in place, AI can become a transformative force for democratic renewal that serves every Nigerian without exception.

Endnotes

- ¹. Soha Rawas, “AI: The Future of Humanity,” *Discover Artificial Intelligence* 4, no. 25 (2024): 2, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s44163-024-00118-3>.
- ². BusinessDay Editorial Board, “Can Nigeria Turn Its Demographic Boom into Economic Dividends?” *BusinessDay*, January 30, 2025, 4, <https://businessday.ng/editorial/article/can-nigeria-turn-its-demographic-boom-into-economic-dividends/>.
- ³. Afolabi Adekaiyaoja, Olajumoke Ayandele, and Dengiyefa Angalapu, *Nigeria’s 2023 Election Security Landscape: Drivers, Actors and Emerging Challenges* (Abuja: Centre for Democracy and Development, December 2023), 7, <https://www.cddwestafrica.org/uploads/reports/file/Nigeria’s-2023-Election-Security-Landscape---Drivers,-Actors-and-Emerging-Challenges.pdf>.
- ⁴. Dunsin Opebiyi, “Unlocking AI in Nigeria: Why Governance, Ethics, Privacy Must Shape Our Digital Future,” *The Guardian Nigeria*, June 10, 2025, 3, <https://guardian.ng/opinion/unlocking-ai-in-nigeria-why-governance-ethics-privacy-must-shape-our-digital-future/>.
- ⁵. Stuart Russell and Peter Norvig, *Artificial Intelligence: A Modern Approach*, 4th ed. (Hoboken, NJ: Pearson, 2021), 1–4.
- ⁶. Luciano Floridi, *The Fourth Revolution: How the Infosphere Is Reshaping Human Reality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 43–47.
- ⁷. Margaret A. Boden, *AI: Its Nature and Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 15–18; Melanie Mitchell, *Artificial Intelligence: A Guide for Thinking Humans* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019), 22–27.
- ⁸. Inaku K. Egere, *Demystifying Emerging Media Theory for Remediating Contextualisations of Digital Communication and Artificial Intelligence in Africa*, Inaugural Lecture (Port Harcourt: Catholic Institute of West Africa, 2025), 16.
- ⁹. Luciano Floridi, *The Ethics of Artificial Intelligence: Principles, Challenges and Opportunities* (Oxfordshire: Oxford University Press, 2023), 23.
- ¹⁰. Stuart Russell, *Human Compatible: AI and the Problem of Control* (New York: Viking, 2019), 5.
- ¹¹. Jeff Hawkins, *A Thousand Brains: A New Theory of Intelligence* (New York: Basic Books, 2021), 12.
- ¹². Stuart Russell, *Human Compatible: AI and the Problem of Control* (New York: Viking, 2019), 5.
- ¹³. Alan Turing, “Computing Machinery and Intelligence,” *Mind* 59, no. 236 (1950): 433.
- ¹⁴. Fouad Sabry, *Smart Machines: Exploring the Future of Machine Learning and Robotics* (One Billion Knowledgeable, 2021), 21.

- ¹⁵. Erik J. Larson, *The Myth of Artificial Intelligence: Why Computers Can't Think the Way We Do* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021), 44.
- ¹⁶. John McCarthy, "What Is Artificial Intelligence?" (Stanford University, 2007), 2, <https://www-formal.stanford.edu/jmc/whatisai.pdf>.
- ¹⁷. Jérôme Duberry, *Artificial Intelligence and Democracy: Risks and Promises of AI-Mediated Citizen–Government Relations* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2022), 19.
- ¹⁸. John Angus Scantling, *AI, Race, and Discrimination: Confronting Racial Bias in Artificial* (John Angus Scandling Publication, 2023), 200.
- ¹⁹. Robert J. Sternberg, *Human intelligence: An introduction* (England: Cambridge University Press, 2019).
- ²⁰. Nicholas Davis, Kirby Goidel and Keith Gaddie, *Democracy's Meaning: How the Public Understands Democracy and Why it Matters*. (University of Michigan Publication, 2022), 15
- ²¹. Greg Mills, Olusegun Obasanjo, Tendai Biti and Jeffrey Herbst, *Democracy Works: Turning Politics to Africa's Advantage* (London: Hurst & Company, 2019). *The Round Table* 108, no.5 (2019): 589–590. doi:10.1080/00358533.2019.1658940.
- ²². Davis, Gladdie, and Goidel, 6.
- ²³. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), *Democracy and human rights in Africa: Role of human rights institutions* (UNESCO, 2009). <https://unesdoc.unesco.org>
- ²⁴. Toyin Falola, *Understanding modern Nigeria: Ethnicity, democracy and development*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 6-7.
- ²⁵. Mills, Obasanjo, Herbst, and Biti, 3.
- ²⁶. Henry A Kissinger, Eric Schmidt, and Daniel Huttenlocher, *The Age of AI and our Human Future*. (Hachette Book Group, 2021).
- ²⁷. Damian Okaibedi Eke, Kutoma Wakunuma, and Simisola Akintoye, (eds.). *Responsible AI in Africa: Challenges and opportunities*. (Cham: Springer, 2023), 4, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-08215-3>.
- ²⁸. Jake Okechukwu Effoduh, *Policy brief: Towards a rights-respecting Artificial Intelligence policy for Nigeria*. (Paradigm Initiative, 2021), 3, <https://www.scholar.google>.
- ²⁹. Federal Republic of Nigeria (Official Gazette), *Nigeria Data Protection Act 2023*, Act No. 37 (Federal Government Publication, 2023), 723.
- ³⁰. PwC Nigeria, *AI in Nigeria – Opportunities, Challenges and Strategic Pathways* (Lagos: PwC Publications, 2023), 9.
- ³¹. Ibrahim Baba and Baba Saleh Ahmed, "An Assessment of Technology as a Contributing Factor to the Development of Democracy in Nigeria: An Opinion Sampling on the Use of Electronic Devices in the 2015 General Elections," *Indiana Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 2, no. 1 (2021): 1-8.
- ³². Simone Natale. *Deceitful Media: Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Communication*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 67.
- ³³. Natale, 72.

- ³⁴ Euripidis Loukis, Saurabh Saxena, Mateusz Rizun, Eleni Maratisi, Muhammad Ali and Panagiotis Alexopoulos. "Artificial Intelligence and E-Governance: Opportunities and Challenges." *Government Information Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (2023): 12–15.
- ³⁵ PwC Nigeria, 26.
- ³⁶ Ademola Oshodi, "In the Age of Artificial Intelligence, Democracy Needs Help," 2025, n.d., <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2025/10/02/in-the-age-of-artificial-intelligence-democracy-needs-help/>.
- ³⁷ Oshodi, n.d.
- ³⁸ Oshodi, n.d.
- ³⁹ Haruna Chiroma, "The Impending Threats of AI to 2027 Nigeria's Democratic Process," *Daily Trust*, February 12, 2024, <https://dailytrust.com/the-impending-threats-of-ai-to-2027-nigerias-democratic-process>.
- ⁴⁰ Chiroma. n.d.
- ⁴¹ "AI and the Elections: A Tool for Democracy or a Weapon of Manipulation?" *AI for Africa*, February 18, 2025, <https://blog.aifat.org/ai-and-the-2027-elections-a-tool-for-democracy-or-a-weapon-of-manipulation>.
- ⁴² Kafilat Taiwo, "Nigeria and the Future of Democracy in the AI Era." *Nigerian Democratic Report*, September 15. 2025, <https://www.ndr.org.ng/nigeria-and-the-future-of-democracy-in-the-ai-era>
- ⁴³ Maximilian Poretschkin et al., "Guideline for Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence - AI Assessment Catalogue," *Fraunhofer Institute*, 2023, 4.
- ⁴⁴ Tony Roberts, "Digital Rights in Closing Civic Space: Lessons from Ten African Countries," *Institute of Development Studies*, 2021, 6. doi:<https://doi.org/10.19088/ids.2021.003>.
- ⁴⁵ Imrana Buba, "Unmasking Boko Haram: Exploring Global Jihad in Nigeria," *African Security Review*, (2021): 66–67. <https://doi:10.1080/10220461.2021.1918235>.
- ⁴⁶ Taiwo. n.d.
- ⁴⁷ *Thisdaylive*, "A Regulatory Framework for Artificial Intelligence", Nrcg 20, 2025, <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2025/03/20/a-regulatory-framework-for-artificial-intelligence/>.
- ⁴⁸ *Businessday NG*, 2025, February 13. "Enforcing Ethical AI: Guidelines vs. Regulations," (February 13, 2025, <https://businessday.ng/news/legal-business/article/enforcing-ethical-ai-guidelines-vs-regulations/>
- ⁴⁹ *BusinessDay NG*, September, 2025.
- ⁵⁰ *BusinessDay NG* "Nigeria Must Build Capacity, Infrastructure, Trust to Shape Its AI Future." *BusinessDay*, September 19, 2025, 1.
- ⁵¹ National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA). *National AI Strategy*, (August 2024), 27. NITDA, *National AI Strategy*, 45.

52. Elizabeth T. Aduloju, "Content Analysis of the Reflection of Media Literacy in Communication Curricula of Select Nigerian Universities," *World of Media: Journal of Russian Media and Journalism Studies* 3 (2019): 66–85.
53. ScienceforAfrica Foundation, *Leveraging AI to Strengthen Health Systems in Nigeria* (April 2025), 3.
54. Anadolu Ajansı, "Nigeria Taps AI to Fight Fake News and Boost Local Languages," *Anadolu Agency*, May 10, 2025, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/nigeria-taps-ai-to-fight-fake-news-and-boost-local-languages/3558957>
55. ScienceforAfrica Foundation, 3.
56. ScienceforAfrica Foundation, 3.