# **Countering Democratic Disruption Amid The Disinformation Phenomenon** Through Artificial Intelligence (Ai) In Public Sector

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#### **ABSTRAK**

Di era saat ini, kecerdasan buatan (AI) telah muncul sebagai terobosan teknologi yang berperan penting dalam membentuk masyarakat dan merevolusi berbagai sektor. Banyak negara demokratis saat ini terpapar beragam informasi palsu yang tersebar melalui media sosial. Dalam politik, disinformasi sering dikaitkan dengan upaya gerakan atau partai tertentu untuk memobilisasi pendukung melawan tatanan moral. Penyebaran disinformasi kemudian menyebabkan munculnya masalah legitimasi pada negara demokrasi sehingga kepercayaan masyarakat terhadap kredibilitas informasi resmi dalam berita menurun dan beralih pada sumber informasi alternatif seperti sosial media. Beberapa negara yang menganut sistem demokrasi melakukan berbagai upaya dalam melawan fenomena disinformasi. Melalui permasalahan ini, penelitian ingin mengkaji pemanfaatan teknologi kecerdasan buatan (AI) sebagai upaya menanggulangi penyebaran disinformasi di sosial media. Di sisi lain, penelitian mengkaji beragam tantangan yang ditimbulkan oleh disinformasi oleh Al dan menyoroti beberapa langkah yang harus diadopsi oleh pemerintah dengan sistem demokrasi untuk mengurangi dampaknya. Penelitian mengutamakan upaya pemerintah dalam melawan disinformasi di negara-negara demokratis, sangat penting untuk menjaga integritas proses demokrasi, meningkatkan ketahanan masyarakat, dan mendorong warga negara yang berpengetahuan untuk mampu membuat keputusan penting demi kepentingan kolektif bangsa.

# **ABSTRACT**

In today's era, artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a groundbreaking technology that plays a vital role in shaping societies and revolutionizing various sectors. Many democratic countries are currently exposed to a variety of false information spread through social media. In politics, disinformation is often associated with the efforts of a particular movement or party to mobilize supporters against the moral order. The spread of disinformation causes the emergence of legitimacy problems in many democratic countries. Citizen confidence in the credibility of official information in the news started to decline and shifts to alternative sources of information such as social media. Several countries that adhere to a democratic system make various efforts to fight the phenomenon of disinformation. The origins of the problems research want to examine the use of AI technology as an effort to overcome the spread of disinformation on social media. Furthermore, this research examines the challenges posed by AI disinformation and highlights several measures that democratic governments should adopt to mitigate its impacts. In summary, prioritizing the fight against disinformation in democratic countries is imperative to safeguard the integrity of democratic processes, enhance societal resilience, and foster an informed citizenry capable of making critical decisions for the collective benefit of the nation.

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# **INTRODUCTION**

The 21st century with its uncontrolled development of information and communication technology marks an era where individuals are connected to one another. Social interaction is not limited by borders, and urgent needs for information are increasing. Online media is the primary platform to acquire information rapidly. However, its current presence threatens the democratic system and is the cause of growing political polarization.

The problem of disinformation has become a negative phenomenon amid the development of information and communication technology. Disinformation is part of the effect of spreading fake news in cyberspace (Pratiwi & Asyarotin, 2019). 70 countries face the phenomenon of global disinformation order (Blanchette et al., 2021). The Global Disinformation Order 2019 Global Inventory of Organized Social Media Manipulation also confirmed such phenomenon through 5 (five) facts concerning (i) social media manipulation in 2019 campaign activities in 70 countries where there is at least 1 (one) political party or government institution that uses social media as a medium to influence public attitudes; (ii) social media has been overrun by authoritarian regimes in which 26 states control information through computer-mediated propaganda; (iii) the use of social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter by state actors to build influence on global society; (iv) China is a key player of global disinformation evidenced by the Weibo, WeChat, and QQ platforms that became the reason for spreading propaganda at demonstrations in Hong Kong in 2019; (v) Facebook remains the primary platform for propaganda dissemination (Kurniawan, Digital Dilemma, Problem Kontemporer Adopsi Media Digital di Indonesia, 2020). The same thing can also be seen from the rampant phenomenon of spreading disinformation on online media such as social media, from fake news to hate speech. This era has become known as post-truth where social media is misused to convey negative information and not in accordance with the existing facts.

The phenomenon of information in public sphere is spurred by the euphoria of freedom of expression on social media in democratic countries which ultimately spurs various problems of information deviation. Netizens and social media have a role as social agents that bring political change (Syahputra, Demokrasi Virtual Dan Perang Siber Di Media Sosial: Perspektif Netizen Indonesia, 2017).

The identity of netizens can be hidden behind anonymity, then create a variety of information including adding or subtracting information from other parties so that it does not correlates with the facts that are not in accordance with the existing facts and disseminate this information without any background check (Kurniawan, Digital Dilemma, Problem Kontemporer Adopsi Media Digital di Indonesia, 2020) so that hoaxes and hate speech become pollution in cyberspace and have a negative impact on digital well-being.

Based on data from the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology of the Republic of Indonesia ("Kominfo"), there were 800,000 fake accounts in 2017 that spread hoaxes. Throughout April 2019, Kominfo also identified 486 hoaxes so that if totaled, 1,731 hoaxes were found within the period August 2018-April 2019. Hoaxes increased in the upcoming election of April 2019 elections (BST, 2020). The increase in the use of hoaxes and the spread of disinformation in political contestation not only occurred in Indonesia, but also in several countries including in the United Kingdom during the Brexit Campaign and in United States during the 2016 General Election. Trump's victory at the time caused democracy to jeopardize.



The uncontrolled spread of disinformation puts into question the legitimacy of governments in democratic countries where people lose their trust in institutions and related institutions. In access to information, people no longer see official institutions and institutions as credible sources of information. In the end, people prefer to seek and receive information from alternative sources such as social media (Kušen & Strembeck, 2018).

Artificial intelligence (AI) can be utilized to accelerate the system and management of public services in government system. AI holds remarkable potential for revolutionizing the functioning of the government public sector. With its ability to analyze vast volumes of data, automate routine tasks, and make accurate predictions, AI can enhance efficiency, transparency, and decision-making within governmental bodies. One of the crucial applications of AI in the government public sector is enhancing public service delivery and tackle one of society's prevailing challenges in today's era: disinformation.

# **Literature Review**

Research indicated that the previous research prioritized the perspective of fake news as the root cause of disinformation with solutions to increase fact-checking and increase public literacy education. Even though there are still many factors that cause disruption that need to be studied related to disinformation. To counter disinformation effectively, governments play a vital role in establishing and enforcing regulatory measures. These policies encompass transparency regulations for social media platforms, ensuring that algorithms do not promote or amplify disinformation. As governments also can collaborate with technology companies to develop sophisticated tools that detect and flag misinformation efficiently, thereby limiting its dissemination. Collaborative efforts encourage the sharing of knowledge, coordination of responses, and development of best practices to address disinformation.

Public sector management theory also offers a framework for government institutions to effectively operate, focusing on factors such as efficiency, effectiveness, integrity, accountability, and responsiveness. These principles lay the groundwork for addressing the challenges posed by AI and disinformation in a rapidly evolving digital landscape. Departing from this, researchers want to examine How Artificial Intelligence as Part of the Government's Strategy, especially in Indonesia, in Controlling Intelligent Software Agents, in this case *Facebook* in amid the Disinformation Phenomenon. These strategies strike a balance between freedom of speech and responsible information distribution, creating an environment where democratic pluralism can flourish.

# **RESEARCH METHODS**

To achieve the research objectives, the method used in this study is the case study qualitative research method. Sturman through his article defines a case study as a method of collecting and recording data. Researchers must be able to understand the events that occur, explain the causes of the occurrence of these events, and predict or generalize from one instance of events to be carried out further through comprehensive investigation so that there is an interrelation between parts of events and creates a new pattern (Bassey, 1999). The case study method will be used to find an understanding of reality in the context of specific strategies used by governments in several countries facing disruption in democracy as a result of the

phenomenon of disinformation. The research data will be qualitative primary data consisting of literature studies related to the dynamics that occur in the event of disinformation in several countries.

# **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

#### Disinformation

Disinformation encompasses all forms of false, inaccurate, or misleading information designed, presented, and promoted intentionally to the point of causing harm in public or even utilized for profit (HLEG, 2018). There were 3 (three) types of information pollution, namely misinformation, disinformation, and mal-information (Kapantai et al., 2021). But in this study, disinformation will be the main focus (losifidis & Nicoli, The battle to end fake news: A qualitative content analysis of Facebook announcements on how it combats disinformation, 2020).

Disinformation has significant negative repercussions in politics, from propaganda to election manipulation. Based on Buzzfeed News analysis, it was found that the selection of fake news on the United States election campaign on Facebook was superior to news agencies (Silverman, 2016). Studies on fake and real news also show that the top 20 fake news stories are more popular with the public than the best fact news during the 2016 Presidential election in United States. This fact is proven through a margin of 8.7-7.3 million from share, react, and comment features (Bennett & Livingston, The disinformation order: Disruptive communication and the decline of democratic institutions, 2018). The same was revealed in a research study by Kušen and Strembeck (2018) on the spread of disinformation during the 2016 Australian Presidential election.

Based on a study by Bennett and Livingston (2018), disinformation is divided into 2 (two) scopes of mobilization, namely the national and global levels. At the global level, disinformation mobilization is not played by domestic actors but is controlled by foreign agents and governments to exert influence on the national politics of a country that made as the target. Efforts include penetrating propaganda and partisan information in domestic communications. This then causes public anger and disappointment which results in a loss of public trust in the state institution which is considered as the main pawn of the state and society (Mishra, 2017).

Russia has a significant role in spreading disinformation in several countries, including the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, and the United States. In its hybrid warfare strategy, Russia has diverse efforts including factory trolls, hackers, and bots to disrupt the democratic process from elections, legislative communications to public discussion (Pomerantsev, 2014). China is also an actor in spreading disinformation through the wumao dang or 50 cent army (Bennett & Livingston, 2018).

# Indonesia and the Post-Truth Phenomenon

Indonesia is currently facing the euphoria of social media, causing a dilemma of construing the meaning of a democratic state. People prioritize "freedom" as the main principle of democracy, but do not really understand the difference between information and speculation (Mofferz, Analisis Kontekstual Hoaks, Emosi Sosial dan Populisme Agama, 2020). The democratic system currently maintained by Indonesia causes the emergence of the millennial generation who actually face confusion. The millennial generation, which is currently glorified by the public, is still mostly trying to figure out their identity. The presence of social media causes the figure in



the formation of identity is not reflected from their parents, family or society but radicals, demagogues, Sophists, and tyrants (Mofferz, 2020). In the end, a group was formed based on similar perspectives to make victims of the post-truth phenomenon feel right about something they opposed.

Mofferz (2020) said that social media as part of social network society has a major influence on the development of the post-truth phenomenon, people are confused with lies in the form of information that enters through social media – opinions, facts, and analysis become difficult to distinguish. Belief in an ideology is increasingly developed through lies which in turn fosters polarization of society.

Amid this phenomenon, Indonesia often faces various issues, including those that have the potential to divide the community that friends are opponents, vice versa. This issue was formed because emotions were awakened in the community through disinformation circulating on social media. Thus, the space for movement in the public sphere feels limited by hate speech in the form of ideology, religious doctrine and identity principles. For example, during the DKI Jakarta Governor election in 2017. The political and public actors involved said that would fight primordial issues. But in fact, the issue was actually instituted by involving elements of SARA to bring down his political opponents. This event then tarnished the stage of Indonesian democracy.

The post-truth phenomenon undermines the nation's democracy, marked by increasing public distrust of public institutions and institutions as well as questions about the credibility of the relationship between the state and society. In the end, what is happening in Indonesia today is that personal beliefs are prioritized by disregarding facts and logic in the public sphere.

In an effort to counter disinformation, as of 28 December 2018 the central government through the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (Kominfo) has operated a crawling machine named AIS. The machine is supported by artificial intelligence (AI) technology that has the ability to classify and detect various links containing negative content (Yuliani, 2017). On the other hand, Kominfo also formed an AIS team consisting of 100 people. The results of monitoring by the AIS machine are then followed up by blocking access, disabling negative internet content, and forwarding to relevant agencies or institutions (Siaran, 2019).

In the period from August 2018 to February 2019, the AIS machine identified 771 hoaxes, 181 of which were related to political issues such as attacks on presidential and vice presidential pairs as well as political parties participating in the 2019 election (Posetti et al., 2020). However, the AIS machine has a drawback, namely its limitation to monitor private social media accounts such as *Facebook*.

# **Anticipating Disinformation by Other Countries**

Not only Indonesia, but other countries are also experiencing democratic decline caused by disinformation and computational propaganda (Jamieson, 2018); as well as what was revealed in previous research by Wooley and Horward (2018); and also research conducted by Rossini, et al (2020) revealed that there is dysfunctional information sharing on WhatsApp and Facebook, the pattern of spreading disinformation on digital platforms has moved. Disinformation began to spread through mobile instant messaging services (MIMS) such as *WhatsApp*, *Snapchat*, and *Facebook Messenger* (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2021). Other MIMS involved *Telegram* in Iran,

WeChat in China, and Line in Thailand. The private application is a place for people to discuss political issues and information, access to information, and business communication because of the end-to-end encrypted feature so that information becomes viral in a matter of seconds just by forwarding the message to another user without having to do a fact check. Based on the Reuters Digital News report, the trend of Facebook usage is lower than messaging applications (Newman et al., Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2019, 2019). WhatsApp is the main platform in spreading disinformation in 7 (seven) countries, including Brazil, India, Pakistan, Zimbabwe, and Mexico.

Brazil, the fourth-largest democracy with a population of 221 million, faces political disinformation through Facebook and WhatsApp. Internet access in Brazil reaches 75% of the population (Rossini et al., Dysfunctional information sharing on WhatsApp and Facebook: The role of political talk, cross-cutting exposure and social corrections., 2021). Referring to a 2019 Reuters Digital News report, 87% of people in Brazil consume online information with a percentage of 54% of Facebook users and 53% of WhatsApp users. Based on the compilation of data by We Are Social in 2017, WhatsApp is recorded to have more than 120 million users in Brazil, so it is ranked second as a frequently used application. While Facebook, as the main technology company that causes online social deviation remains at the first ranked. Facebook and WhatsApp became 2 (two) central applications of Brazilian diet news where disinformation spread through the two applications. Local governments along with institutions, media offices, and private organizations (NGOs) are working on fact-checking services to mitigate the spread of false and misleading information.

The study of Rossini et al. (2020) underscores that application users have a great responsibility for the spread of disinformation in the post-truth era. This behavior has come to be known as democratically dysfunctional news sharing (Chadwick et al., 2018). Intelligent software agents like Facebook only act through curating algorithms and content that is used as "bait" to encourage the spread of disinformation. Based on the results of a cross-platform relationship study, 46% of users with political topics on *Facebook* are vulnerable to engaging in the deliberate spread of disinformation through WhatsApp. While 42% of WhatsApp users with the same topic are also involved in spreading disinformation through Facebook intentionally (Rossini et al., 2021). This suggests that both platforms are vulnerable to the spread of disinformation between users, but the possibility of not being free to spread disinformation due to social sanctions makes users choose safer spaces to spread disinformation.

On the other hand, extreme ideological positions and dysfunctional sharing do not show significant involvement in the deliberate spread of disinformation. This result reflects the complexity of partisanship and political ideology in multiparty systems with the level of dissatisfaction with unstable political and democratic systems where in the end people feel unaffiliated with the ideology of candidates and political parties that should represent two sides of the political spectrum.

According to a study by Blanchette, et al. (2021), Taiwan is also a country facing an explosion of disinformation campaigns by China. One of the strategies carried out by the Taiwanese government to respond to the phenomenon of disinformation that occurs is the establishment of meme engineering in 2019. This team was created as a humor over rumor approach strategy where every government department has a team. Within an hour, each department is required to create a meme as a form of clarification on an issue, no more than 20 words in each title and



consisting only of 2 (two) pictures. Quoting Audrey Tang, Taiwan's Minister of Digital Affairs, "we have evidence to show that everybody who has seen this clarification through the community will never share the original disinformation again. In a sense, it acts as an inoculation as a memetic vaccine… people would voluntarily share our disinformation counter-clarification message."

Another effort was made by the Political Warfare Bureau of Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense through the utilization of data system analysis to understand disinformation tactics by the Chinese communist party in real time to strengthen prevention of the spread of disinformation. In addition, the public also contributed to the prevention of the spread of disinformation through the establishment of the Taiwan FactCheck Center (TFC) and the g0v (gov-zero) group in collaboration with Taiwanese hacker communications. These organizations and communities do not accept donations from the government to show the transparency of information to the public and encourage the public to participate in government. Civil society organizations, governments, and social media companies are also collaborating to combat disinformation through fact-checking bots called *Cofact* on the *Line* app developed by *g0v. Cofact* provides users with a service to report *spam* and misinformation. *Line* also worked with TFC to verify information and initiated a global campaign to educate users on the identification of fake news. *Facebook* and TFC also fact-check information spread through its platform and hold disinformation education campaigns for users in Taiwan.

According to Puma Shen, an adjunct professor at National Taipei University, there is a high level of public trust in Taiwan in its government, resulting in a variety of multifaceted approaches taken by governments, organizations, and companies related to countering disinformation which has been a success in Taiwan.

# Is Artificial Intelligence an Effective Strategy in Dealing with Post-Truth Phenomenon?

Based on studies in Indonesia, Brazil, and Taiwan, it can be said that every country seeks the use of artificial intelligence (AI) technology to deal with the post-truth phenomenon that is sweeping the entire nation with a democratic system. Czech Republic (CZE), Finland, Spain and the United Kingdom (UK) also countries that utilize public service media (PSM) as part of solutions to counter disinformation in different context (Horowitz et al., 2022). PSM plays fundamental role in combating disinformation by promoting media literacy, ensuring independence, and fostering trust. As citizens become increasingly inundated with conflict narratives and manipulation attempts, PSM stands at the forefront of disseminating accurate information, empowering individuals to discern fact from fiction.

Facebook as the main platform for spreading disinformation, is also making efforts by detecting and classifying negative content through fact checking, which requires machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI). The integration of AI technologies, such as natural language processing and machine learning algorithms, empower Facebook to improve its ability to detect and counter disinformation. By automating the identification process, AI assists in promptly addressing disinformation campaigns and minimizing their impact. On the other hand, by analyzing textual patterns, image content, and contextual cues, AI can assess the reliability and accuracy of information. Combined with fact-checking initiatives, AI allows Facebook to highlight potentially false or misleading content and label it accordingly, providing users with context and enabling informed decision-making.

In the midst of efforts to utilize machine learning and AI, the technology also has weaknesses. Quoting Scharre (2019), "if the data don't represent the system's operating environment well, the system can fail in the real world... AI systems can go from supersmart to superdumb in an instant." The increase in AI detection systems is becoming an urgency, especially in interpreting satire, opinion, deepfakes, and "cloaking" because these forms of information are vulnerable to use by related actors to spread fake news on Facebook (losifidis & Nicoli, The battle to end fake news: A qualitative content analysis of Facebook announcements on how it combats disinformation, 2020). Facebook's collaboration with the public sector has led to the implementation of measures promoting content authenticity and transparent sourcing. By prioritizing content from reputable news organizations and flagging potentially misleading sources, Facebook strives to provide users with reliable information.

Concerns about AI are also growing in the sphere of human wellbeing. In response to contentious concerns, technology experts and philosophers provide support for human autonomy in AI design systems (Floridi et al., 2018) with the aim of providing benefits to humanity (Humanity, 2020). But the reality that is happening today, the growing business model only utilizes user data as a monetization base. Popular platforms such as Facebook prioritize user attention to a topic compared to human wellbeing through user data collection technology that is used as input. In the business model of social media platforms, humans are used as almaterial or means-to-an-end.

The implications for human autonomy are questionable because of the inequality between commercial interests and users. Marketers have the power as actual consumers so that in serving the interests of users, marketers will prioritize their interests by ignoring human wellbeing. This practice then increases engagement that is manipulative and deceiving users but effective for doing business. A machine learning algorithm in this system is utilized to optimize marketers' business models. Human autonomy on technologies such as behavior, personal data information, and sources is protected as a form of compromise between marketers and platform users. As a result, users are vulnerable to misinformation, emotional manipulation, and exploitation (Burr et al., 2020).

The government's strategy of using AI and machine learning to counter the spread of disinformation is the right one. As we know that AI has its ability to analyze vast amounts of data efficiently. Al algorithms can process diverse information sources, such as social media feeds, news articles, and public databases, to identify disinformation patterns rapidly. With advanced data analytics, it will enable proactive detection, enabling public authorities to evaluate the credibility of information disseminated to the masses. Machine learning (ML) models can identify inaccurate or misleading information, enabling governments to classify and flag misleading content effectively.

However, ensuring AI systems are free from bias is crucial. Careful attention should be given to the development and training of AI models in the public sector to minimize discriminatory outcomes while providing unbiased information and decision-making processes. The use of AI in diminishing disinformation must adhere to ethical guidelines. Therefore, transparency, accountability, and privacy considerations should govern the design, deployment, and usage of Al tools, safeguarding individual rights and democratic values.



But with all these technological limitations, collaboration between robots (AI) and humans is still needed, especially in the development of ethics in Al. Trust is the main foundation of the relationship between robots (AI) and humans. Trust between 2 (two) actors can be built through changes in the work system, ranging from new collaborative models to the right division of work. On the other hand, soft instruments are an important tool to create human adaptability to the presence of technology that continues to develop, vice versa.

To support this goal, Al developers and deployers in an application must integrate new technologies into parts of the system. The quality of data produced by the AI system must go through a data training process so that data selection can be adjusted to predetermined standards (Boni, 2021). Thus, these methods are used to ensure operational standards that are acceptable to the community and in line with ethical principles. Other efforts can be reconsidered, for example the creation of in-application features that provide facilities for users to control data entered on their social media accounts. Governments must stay committed as well to updating AI algorithms promptly and providing adequate resources to combat disinformation effectively.

# **CONCLUSIONS**

Al presents a promising pathway to mitigate the pervasive menace of disinformation within the government public sector. The rapid development of technology not only has a positive impact but also a negative impact on human life. Today's society has access to unlimited internetbased communication technology. Freedom of expression on social media is a new climate in today's democracy, including the spread of disinformation such as fake news, hate speech, and hoaxes caused by polarization community on social media. Disinformation is becoming endemic to digital networks. Newman, et al, (2018) states that digital technology accentuates the occurrence of social deviations such as disinformation. Evolving technology is also the main cause of the moral order that exists today. Social media is used as a space for those who want to disrupt human wellbeing through disinformation, especially for ideological purposes that often occur before elections (Sikorsky, 2022).

Regardless of who is to blame, social media has a very significant role as an accelerator to change public perception towards a certain agenda and cause divisions amid the society through discourses that arise due to selective exposure on social media based on user bias. Disinformation should be identified as a multifaceted problem that requires a variety of approaches to prevent and resolve. Governments, regulators, think tanks, academics, and technology providers need to collaborate to create an internet with less disinformation.

Governments in several countries including Indonesia, Brazil, and Taiwan have made various efforts to counter the spread of disinformation. The efforts made certainly cannot be separated from artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning technology. But until now, the phenomenon of disinformation often incurs dynamics in cyberspace, especially in Indonesia. The government's strategy has not been fully effective in countering disinformation. Collaboration between humans and robots (AI) can be considered for trust-based AI management. By leveraging Al's analytical capabilities, verification tools, content moderation, and early detection mechanisms, governments can proactively combat and diminish the spread of disinformation.

This research aims to imply that collaboration between governments, regulators, think tanks, academia, and technology providers is not enough to stem the spread of disinformation. In addition to the imposition of expressive sanctions and cooperation between parliamentarians, regulators, and social media companies in the establishment of protection on social media (Newman et al., 2019), a new collaboration between humans and robots (AI) with the application of principles that are acceptable to society must be prioritized. In this collaboration, humans can play a role through the formation of digital literacy regarding AI, utilizing collaboration between robots (AI) and humans to improve personal competence. Communication science has various roles in the sustainability of these strategies. Starting from the presence of an expert to monitor, analyze, and strategically communicate with someone who can play a role in AI training to ensure the system on AI is in accordance with the ethical standards in society. Ultimately, political will be needed to reach effective decisions so that new rules can be implemented and by integrating AI into their operations, governments can foster a more informed and resilient society, where reliable information prevails.

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