

AI in Political Communication: The Strategic Role of Artificial Intelligence in China's Authoritarian Governance

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Abstract

In totalitarian countries like China, powerful social monitoring technologies and AI play a crucial role in political communication. This study analyzes the Chinese government's use of AI technologies, including facial recognition and big data analytics, to monitor civilians closely. The focus is on AI systems such as surveillance tools and the chatbot Xue Xi, which disseminates political narratives and manages information flow. While these technologies enhance state efficiency, they raise significant concerns regarding human rights violations and restrictions on free speech. This research addresses the critical question of how AI influences authoritarian governance in China, demonstrating through case studies how these tools consolidate governmental authority and threaten individual liberties. The integration of AI into China's governance framework poses risks to civil liberties domestically and impacts global power dynamics. The study emphasizes the need for ongoing evaluation of AI's effects on democratic principles and human rights worldwide, recommending international collaboration to address AI governance concerns.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence (AI); Big Data; China; Authoritarianism, Governance Model.

1. Introduction

The introduction of artificial intelligence (AI) represents a revolutionary change in the manner in which governments and communities interact. This change is defined by the unparalleled capacity of computer systems to imitate the cognitive capabilities of humans. The fast development of artificial intelligence has spread across a variety of industries over the course of the last ten years, including healthcare, information management, and national security. As a consequence, decision-making processes have become more sophisticated, and efficiency have increased. The development of these breakthrough, however, has brought up an increase in worries over the possibility of abuse, notably in

the field of political communication. This dual-edged nature of AI necessitates a comprehensive exploration of how this technology is integrated and leveraged by various regimes to maintain or consolidate power (Feldstein, 2019; Kolade, 2024).

When it comes to political communication, artificial intelligence has a significant influence, and this is especially noticeable in authoritarian regimes, where it is used as a strategic instrument for government and control. There is no other place where this is more obvious than in China, a nation that is well-known for its extensive use of technology to strengthen governmental power and guarantee stability. The strategic deployment of artificial intelligence undertaken by the Chinese government covers a multidimensional strategy. This approach includes the implementation of sophisticated surveillance systems, algorithm-driven content restriction, and the propagation of official narratives via controlled media (Gilbert & Mohseni, 2018; Knutsen, 2015). The mechanisms not only strengthen the government's ability to monitor and control its population, but they also redefine the relationship between the extent of state power and the protection of civil liberties.

The massive surveillance network that China has in place, which includes face recognition technology and big data analytics, is a prime example of how artificial intelligence has been incorporated into Chinese administration. These techniques make it possible to monitor people in real time, which improves the government's ability to control social stability and prevent dissension from occurring. These kinds of systems lead to a culture of self-censorship and social acquiescence, which in turn reduces the amount of space available for political action and public engagement. The efficiency of these artificial intelligence-driven surveillance measures has resulted in a surge in investment and development, which has further incorporated such technologies into the framework of governance (Taeihagh, 2021). This study attempts to examine these practices, detailing how AI-driven surveillance methods expand state control and attack core human rights. Including privacy and freedom of speech (Aloamaka & Omozue, 2024).

Artificial intelligence has a significant influence in molding political discourse via controlled digital platforms, in addition to its function in monitoring. An excellent illustration of this is the Xue Xi Qiang Guo application, which functions not just as a teaching tool but also as a medium for the dissemination of official propaganda. Utilizing artificial intelligence algorithms, this platform provides selected information that only supports the ideology of the government but also discreetly influences the perceptions of the general people. Xue Xi is a prime example of how artificial intelligence can be utilized not only for surveillance but also for ideological alignment and social conditioning (Gherhes et al., 2023). This is accomplished by systematically reinforcing narratives that are in line with the objectives of the state. The strategic deployment of artificial intelligence in such applications indicates a change in the manner in which political propaganda is designed and broadcast, which has major consequences for the independence of public opinion (Howard et al., 2018).

The oldest theory is Authoritarian Communication, which was born during Gutenberg's time (Harmonis, 2022) The authoritarian theory has been maintained and developed over the centuries, and in the context of authoritarian governance in China, the use of artificial intelligence (AI) further strengthens this control. In such societies, the truth of information heavily relies on the government, which employs AI to monitor and censor the news disseminated to the public. In other words, the role of the media, now supported by AI technology, is to inform the public about what the government desires regarding the information that the people want to know. Within this system, the media is responsible for ensuring the accuracy of the news or information provided by the government, which is now enhanced by AI algorithms to prevent challenges to that information. The head of state and the government, along with the first lady, only allow the existence of media with government approval, and although private ownership is permitted, licenses for publication and broadcasting can be revoked at the discretion of the leaders. Thus, the right to censor news is entirely controlled by the government, which is now equipped with AI technology to enhance the effectiveness of its control over information and public narratives.

The artificial intelligence model that China has developed has important implications for the whole world because it demonstrates the possibility that technology might be utilized as a tool of government that places a higher priority on control than on human rights. This vulnerability is highlighted by the exporting of artificial intelligence surveillance technology to other governments, which creates a template for authoritarian regimes that are achieving their goal of consolidating power (Hoxhaj et al., 2023). The development of such techniques poses a challenge to international human rights norms and raises issues about the ethical use of artificial intelligence. Furthermore, the purpose of this research is to shed light on the junction of technology and power, demonstrating how artificial intelligence has the potential to both strengthen democratic institutions and weaken them. It investigates the ways in which

China's example establishes a precedent that has the potential to influence the adoption of artificial intelligence by governments all over the globe (Saeidnia et al., 2024).

One of the most distinctive aspects of this study is that it investigates the dual-use nature of artificial intelligence as a tool for both social control and governance. Through an analysis of the more widespread effects of political communication tools powered by artificial intelligence, this article provides fresh perspectives on the ways in which technology amplifies the power of the state. The importance of researching artificial intelligence in this context goes beyond China, as it contributes to conversations taking place all over the world about how to strike a balance between technological advancement and the preservation of human rights. The use of artificial intelligence for political objectives raises a number of significant ethical concerns, including questions of discrimination and transparency, as well as the possible psychological consequences on populations that are being observed (Saeidnia et al., 2024).

It is important to note that this study is unusual since it provides a comprehensive examination of the ways in which AI-enabled platforms like Xue Xie contribute to the introduction and control of political processes. A more compelling and ubiquitous type of influence may be created via the use of AI-driven technologies, which, in contrast to conventional propaganda techniques, are able to personalize the distribution of material to specific users. The government is now able to achieve a degree of accuracy in the transmission of information that was before unachievable thanks to this individualized method. Additionally, the study will investigate how these technologies are used to strengthen pre-existing power structures and restrict prospects for dissent by altering digital environments in order to conform with state goals.

Presented data that illustrated the ramifications of artificial intelligence on governance and civil rights in authoritarian environments, this study makes a contribution to the academic discussion by highlighting these implications. This research attempts to explain how artificial intelligence impacts public opinion management and the repression of dissent by gaining a knowledge of the methods via which AI is incorporated into state administration. Additionally, it will stimulate discussion on the future trajectory of artificial intelligence usage in political settings, especially with regard to the regulatory and ethical considerations that are required to avoid misuse (Cath, 2018).

The techniques that governments use in order to make use of this technology are constantly evolving in tandem with the capabilities of artificial intelligence. The Chinese approach exemplifies a paradigm in which artificial intelligence serves not only as a tool for the growth of technology but also as a foundational component of state control. The purpose of this study is to provide light on the implications that such applications have for democratic principles, human rights, and international political conventions. It also highlights the vital need for an evaluation of the role that artificial intelligence plays in contemporary governance. It is anticipated that the results will contribute to the worldwide conversation on striking a balance between the advancement of technology and ethical responsibility.

2. Methods

This study employs a qualitative analytical approach to investigate the strategic use of AI in China's authoritarian governance, focusing on its application in political communication and social control. Primary data sources include policy documents such as the 2017 New Generation AI Development Plan (NGAIDP) and government-issued reports, which provide insights into the strategic priorities and regulatory frameworks underpinning China's AI deployment. To comprehend how AI technologies are practically integrated, data was gathered from official publication, government announcements, and technological assessments. Secondary sources include reports from news agencies, think tanks, and scholarly articles that analyze China's digital governance infrastructure and AI-driven systems. These sources were systematically coded and analyzed to identify recurring themes and patterns of state control through AI, as seen in the widespread use of surveillance technologies like facial recognition and the comprehensive social credit system (Khanal et al., 2024).

The research also included an in-depth analysis of digital platforms such as the Xue Xi Qiang Guo app. Data regarding its deployment and functionality was extracted from academic analyses and media reports that detail its usage for propagating Xi Jinping Thought among party members. This involved examining reports on the app's integration with natural language processing tools and its capabilities to produce ideological content (Lams, 2018). Additionally, the study incorporated qualitative assessments of China's surveillance practices in regions like Xinjiang, where data on biometrics and behavioral tracking technologies were reviewed to illustrate their operational mechanisms and societal impact. Comparative data from other authoritarian regimes, such as Russia and Iran, were analyzed to underscore

the global relevance of AI-enabled political control. The thematic coding approach enabled the identification of cross-national strategies in AI application for narrative management and citizen surveillance, shedding light on commonalities and differences in their digital authoritarian practices.

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3. Result and Discussion

Key Findings on AI's Role in China's Political Communication

The analysis of AI application in China's political communication highlights how deeply embedded these technologies have become in state mechanisms for surveillance and control. Advanced AI-powered systems, such as facial recognition and big data analytics, have reshaped the way the Chinese government monitors its population, significantly impacting citizens' rights to privacy and freedom of expression. The deployment of these surveillance tools facilitates extensive data collection from various sources, including vast CCTV networks, mobile applications, and traditional government records (Yang & Yuchtman, 2022). This level of monitoring not only enhances the state's ability to track individual behaviors but also extends its reach into every face of public and private life. The absence of explicit consent in data collection practices raises serious ethical and human rights concerns, as it infringes upon basic privacy rights and paves the way for disproportionate monitoring and punitive measures.

One of the most significant examples of AI integration is China's Credit System, which underscores the state's sophisticated approach to behavioral regulation. This system assigns citizens a social score based on their activities, interactions, and adherence to laws and social norms. Those with high scores are rewarded with privileges such as improved access to credit, better employment opportunities, and preferential treatment in services, creating an incentive structure that encourages compliance with state directives. Conversely, individuals with low scores face penalties, including restricted mobility, exclusion from certain services, and even public shaming (Khanal et al., 2024). This AI-driven system not only reinforces social control but also fosters a climate of fear and self-censorship, as citizens become wary of behaviors that could negatively impact their standing.

The strategic use of such AI technologies illustrates how the Chinese government prioritizes maintaining political control over safeguarding individual rights. This emphasis on technological dominance is evident in the way these systems are woven into everyday governance, supporting a larger framework of state oversight and influence. By combining data from a variety of sources -ranging from online behavior and social media activity to physical surveillance-the government can create comprehensive profiles of its citizens. This robust data integration allows for real-time decision-making and predictive policing, enabling authorities to intervene swiftly in potential dissent or unrest. The extensive reach of these practices not only impacts individual liberties but also exacerbates social inequalities, as algorithmic biases can lead to disproportionate targeting of specific groups or behaviors.

Furthermore, the potential for algorithmic bias inherent in AI systems adds a layer of complexity to these issues. The algorithms used in surveillance technologies may reflect and amplify existing societal prejudices if not properly designed and tested with diverse datasets. This can result in discriminatory practices that disproportionately impact certain demographics, deepening social divides and reducing trust in state institutions. The increasing reliance on AI for governance thus underscores the dual-edged nature of technological progress: while it can enhance administrative efficiency and control, it also poses profound ethical dilemmas and risks to civil liberties.

Advanced Surveillance and Social Control Mechanisms

AI technologies in China play a crucial role not only in maintaining public security but also in reinforcing comprehensive social and political control. Facial recognition systems forms the backbone of this surveillance network, embedded in more than 200 million CCTV cameras across the country to facilitate real-time identification and the tracking of individuals' movements in urban spaces (Ezzat et al., 2021). This extensive deployment allows authorities to observe activities at an unprecedented scale, from public streets and transportation hubs to places of work and commerce. The integration of this technology ensures that individuals remain under continuous scrutiny, contributing to an environment where freedom of expression and public dissent are substantially curtailed. Citizens, aware of the ever-present surveillance, may self-censor their actions and words, effectively stifling open dialogue and limiting civic engagement.

In addition to facial recognition, China's surveillance architecture is enhanced by technologies such as voice recognition and gait analysis. Voice recognition capabilities enable the government to monitor phone conversations, track voices across media, and identify individuals speaking in public or over digital platforms. Gait analysis adds another layer of identification, allowing authorities to recognize individuals even when facial visibility is compromised or obscured. These tools collectively create a multi-layered surveillance structure that extends the state's ability to maintain control over its populace by anticipating and suppressing dissent before it manifests openly. This type of proactive surveillance discourages individuals from participating in activities that could be perceived as subversive, reinforcing the state's authority and limiting public space for resistance or criticism.

The application of AI technologies in politically sensitive areas such as Xinjiang exemplifies the Chinese government's strategic use of surveillance for targeted ethnic and regional control. In this region, surveillance measures are intensified to monitor the movements and behaviors of the Uyghur Muslim population and other minority groups. The use of predictive policing in Xinjiang, which employs machine learning algorithms to identify potential security threats, showcases the extent of AI's role in preemptive governance. Automated alert systems, which flag activities deemed suspicious or potentially disruptive, enable rapid response by security forces and dissuade residents from engaging in behaviors that might be construed as dissent. These technologies are not only reactive but predictive, reinforcing a pervasive sense of being watched and effectively silencing opposition before it can take shape (Morrison, 2016).

The implications of these AI-driven surveillance measures extend beyond Xinjiang and resonate throughout the broader fabric of Chinese society. The widespread use of predictive policing and automated alert systems empowers authorities to preemptively manage public protests and spontaneous gatherings, ensuring that dissent is systematically controlled. This capacity for anticipatory action strengthens the regime's grip on power by normalizing state intervention in public and private life. The psychological impact of living under constant surveillance fosters an atmosphere of compliance and submission, where individuals are less likely to voice discontent or organize collective actions. The resulting social climate is one where surveillance and control are deeply interwoven into the daily experiences of citizens, blurring the line between public safety and state repression.

Ideological Dissemination Through AI Tools

The strategic use of AI for ideological dissemination represents a powerful extension of the Chinese government's control mechanisms beyond physical and digital surveillance into the sphere of thought and belief. The Xue Xi Qiang Guo app is a leading example of how AI-driven platforms are being harnessed to entrench political ideology within the daily routines of citizens. Introduced as part of a broader campaign to embed "Xi Jinping Thought" - a doctrine emphasizing loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party and national rejuvenations- into public consciousness, the app utilizes interactive educational modules, quizzes, and articles to promote state-approved narratives (Vuori, 2024). By leveraging natural language processing (NLP) capabilities, the app tailors its content to align with user preferences and engagement patterns, thereby increasing its impact as a tool for ideological indoctrination.

The app's design promotes a form of digital engagement where users are incentivized through points and rewards for consistent use and high scores on quizzes related to party ideology. This gamification of political learning not only encourages voluntary participation but also subtly compels regular use, especially among state employees and party members, who may be mandated to maintain high engagement levels. The sophisticated use of NLP allows the app to adapt to user behavior, presenting personalized content that reinforces desired narratives. Such customization makes the app more appealing and effective in its mission to align public thought with state doctrine.

However, the deployment of the Xue Xi Qiang Guo app raises significant concerns about freedom of expression and access to plurality of perspectives. Critics have noted that the app functions as an extension of state propaganda, narrowing the spectrum of information available to the public and reinforcing a singular viewpoint (Fallon, 2022). By dominating the digital information space with CCP-approved content, the app marginalizes alternative narratives and limits exposure to critical or dissenting voices. This use of AI to reinforce ideological conformity contributes to a media environment where public discourse is heavily skewed toward state-sanctioned positions, eroding the diversity of viewpoints that is essential for robust and healthy debate.

Moreover, the implications of such a platform extend beyond individual users to broader social and cultural dynamics. The widespread use of the Xue Xi Qiang Guo app exemplifies how AI-driven tools can influence societal norms and expectations. In this context, engaging with state-approved content becomes not just a personal choice but a collective standard that defines loyalty and compliance within communities. The subtle pressure to participate in such digital indoctrination contributes to a

homogenization of thought, where deviation from the expected narrative may be viewed with suspicion or lead to social and professional repercussions. The integration of AI into ideological dissemination thus serves to fortify the state's hold on power by aligning public sentiment and behavior with its objectives, ensuring that the digital ecosystem reflects and amplifies the political values of the CCP.

Global Implications and Comparative Analysis

China's AI strategy has far-reaching implications for global governance and the future trajectory of digital authoritarianism. The exportation of AI surveillance technologies developed in China to other countries indicates that this model is gaining traction among regimes seeking to enhance political stability and control without democratizing. By showcasing its technological prowess and positioning itself as a leader in AI applications for governance, China sets a precedent that challenges international norms regarding digital rights and privacy (Jones, 2022). This export strategy includes the dissemination of surveillance equipment, facial recognition software, and social monitoring platforms to states in Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East, effectively spreading a template of state-centric technological control.

The attractiveness of China's model lies in its seamless integration of rapid technological development with robust state oversight, offering a comprehensive framework that appeals to nations aiming to modernize without adopting liberal democratic reforms. This blend of technological advancement and political centralization provides a blueprint for "efficient" governance that emphasizes state security over civil liberties. Such practices set concerning precedents for digital rights, as adopting nations may replicate China's methods, prioritizing political stability and surveillance at the expense of privacy and freedom of expression. As more countries implement these systems, the risk of a global shift towards normalized surveillance and restricted civil liberties becomes more pronounced (Kitchin, 2020).

A comparative analysis of other authoritarian regimes, such as Russia and Iran, illustrates differing yet complementary approaches to AI usage for power consolidation. Russia's use of AI is more focused on digital disinformation and the manipulation of social media to influence public perception both domestically and abroad. By employing AI algorithms to amplify favorable narratives and sow discord among opposition groups, Russia harnesses technology as a tool for psychological operations and soft power. In contrast, Iran's strategy relies on AI to bolster online surveillance and monitor the activities of dissidents, using technology to suppress freedom of speech and political opposition (Zeng, 2020). These approaches, while distinct, underscore the adaptive nature of AI as a means to reinforce state power across different political contexts.

China's approach stands out for its comprehensiveness. Unlike the single domain focuses of Russia and Iran, China employs AI across multiple sectors, blending surveillance, predictive policing, and ideological dissemination to create an all-encompassing system of control. This level of integration not only strengthens internal political stability but also enhances the country's soft power by showcasing its ability to maintain order and economic growth through advanced technology. For other nations observing China's success, this model presents a compelling case for replicating a form of digital governance that avoids the perceived chaos of liberal democracy. The widespread adoption of these practices poses significant challenges for global democratic values, potentially leading to an era where digital authoritarianism becomes a normative governance strategy.

Theoretical Implications and Broader Context

Situating the findings on China's use of AI within the frameworks of authoritarian communication and surveillance studies reveals the complex and multifaceted nature of technology's role in governance. Authoritarian communication theory posits that centralized control over information is a critical tool for regimes to suppress dissent and maintain power. The Chinese Communist Party has adeptly employed AI technologies to reinforce this control, leveraging these tools not just for passive monitoring but for active management of public discourse. The integration of AI in propaganda tools like the Xue Xi Qiang Guo app illustrates how technology serves to disseminate state narratives, embedding ideological conformity into the social fabric. This integration highlights a shift from traditional forms of state messaging to AI-powered platforms that adapt content to user engagement, ensuring a pervasive and tailored ideological influence (de-Lima-Santos et al., 2024).

Surveillance studies further explain how the omnipresence of AI technologies in public and private spaces shapes societal behaviors. The sheer scale and sophistication of surveillance tools -ranging from facial recognition to predictive policing- embed a sense of continuous oversight. This results in an environment where citizens are acutely aware of being watched, leading to self-censorship and behavioral conformity. The normalization of such comprehensive surveillance creates a society where dissent becomes a risky endeavor, reshaping social norms around expression and compliance. The psychological impact of living under such scrutiny reinforces state power not just by punishing dissent,

but by preemptively discouraging it. These practices reflect a broader trend in digital authoritarianism where AI becomes a central tool in shaping citizen behavior and aligning it with state interests.

The ethical implications of AI deployment in such a context are profound. The use of AI-driven surveillance without transparency raises concerns about privacy violations and the erosion of trust in state institutions. More critically, the algorithms underpinning these systems often reflect biases present in the data they are trained on. This bias can lead to systematic discrimination, disproportionately affecting marginalized groups and exacerbating existing social inequalities. In China's case, data used to develop surveillance algorithms may be skewed by socio-political priorities, leading to policies that unjustly target specific communities, such as the Uyghur population in Xinjiang. The lack of diverse training datasets further amplifies these issues, resulting in discriminatory practices that undermine fairness and equity (Williams et al., 2018).

For the Uyghur population, the impact of such biases has been particularly severe. AI-driven surveillance systems, including facial recognition and predictive policing tools, have been deployed extensively in Xinjiang under the guise of maintaining social stability. However, these systems often disproportionately flag Uyghur individuals as potential threats, subjecting them to heightened scrutiny, arbitrary detentions, and invasive monitoring of daily activities. This pervasive surveillance has led to significant psychological distress within the community, fostering an environment of fear and oppression. Moreover, the use of biased AI tools amplifies systemic injustices, as these technologies legitimize and institutionalize discriminatory practices against minorities. By embedding prejudice into ostensibly neutral algorithms, the Chinese government leverages AI as a tool to reinforce authoritarian control while marginalizing dissenting voices. This raises profound ethical concerns about the role of AI in governance, particularly in contexts where accountability mechanisms are weak or absent. To address these issues, a critical re-examination of the design and deployment of AI technologies is necessary, alongside international advocacy for the protection of human rights and the implementation of ethical AI standards. To mitigate these risks, scholars and human rights advocates call for greater transparency, algorithmic accountability, and the inclusion of diverse data in AI training. Incorporating oversight mechanisms -whether through independent audits or participatory design processes- can help ensure that AI systems are developed and implemented with ethical safeguards. Such measures are critical in promoting fairness and protecting civil liberties, particularly in contexts where technology has the potential to be wielded as an instrument of repression. The role of international collaboration is also emphasized; global standards and cross-border agreements could play a role in encouraging responsible AI use and preventing the normalization of oppressive technologies.

The broader implications for democratic norms and global governance are significant. As China continues to export its model of AI-powered governance, other states may adopt similar systems, accelerating the shift toward global digital authoritarianism. This potential for replication highlights the urgency for democratic societies to champion ethical AI practices and advocate for frameworks that prioritize human rights. Failure to address these challenges could contribute to a world where the line between technological progress and repression becomes increasingly blurred, altering the balance of power in ways that fundamentally challenges the values underpinning democratic governance.

4. Conclusions

This study highlights the profound role artificial intelligence plays in enhancing and sustaining authoritarian governance in China. The Chinese government has increasingly employed advanced surveillance technologies, such as facial recognition and predictive policing, to assert comprehensive control over its citizens. These technologies facilitate meticulous monitoring, enabling the suppression of dissent and the maintenance of control, particularly in regions like Xinjiang. In these areas, AI-powered surveillance is not only used to monitor daily activities but also to target and quash resistance.

The integration of AI into media and communication platforms further consolidates state control. One example is the Xue Xi Qiang Guo app, which showcases how AI-driven tools are harnessed to propagate political ideology and reinforce government narratives. These platforms serve dual purposes: enhancing governance efficiency and functioning as mechanisms for ideological reinforcement. Through AI, content that aligns with state-approved ideologies dominates public discourse, ensuring that alternative narratives are either marginalized or erased.

The implications of these findings are profound, especially when considering the ethical, social, and political ramifications of AI's role in governance. The widespread use of AI-driven surveillance in China raises significant concerns about privacy and civil liberties. This environment fosters self-censorship, stifling freedom of expression and political participation. Moreover, the potential for AI systems to perpetuate or exacerbate societal biases and inequalities presents a critical issue, as algorithmic decision-making disproportionately impacts marginalized communities. The deployment of AI as a tool for narrative control further complicates these concerns, leading to essential questions about the responsibilities of developers and policymakers in ensuring that technology supports fairness, diversity, and human rights, rather than undermining them.

However, the limitations of this research must be acknowledged. Restricted access to data, primarily due to state censorship, poses significant challenges to a comprehensive understanding of AI's full impact. Much of the information available is filtered through state-controlled media, which may downplay or obscure the extent of surveillance measures and control mechanisms in place. This limitation highlights the necessity of integrating independent perspectives from human rights organizations, whistleblowers, and international analysts to achieve a clearer, more balanced view of AI's role in governance. Collaborative efforts in data collection and sharing are essential for fostering transparency and revealing the nuanced ways AI is applied in authoritarian contexts.

The contributions of this research extend beyond China, providing valuable insights into the broader global implications of AI in governance. The findings present a model of how AI can be leveraged by authoritarian regimes to consolidate power—an approach that may be replicated by other governments seeking to strengthen control. As such, this research underscores the urgent need for democratic societies to promote ethical AI practices that prioritize transparency, accountability, and the protection of individual rights. To address the global challenges posed by AI in governance, future research should compare AI governance models across various political regimes, examining the socio-political impacts of these technologies and developing policy recommendations that align AI use with democratic principles. Ensuring that AI serves as a force for empowerment, equity, and human rights, rather than oppression, will be crucial in shaping its future role on the global stage.

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