THE AUTONOMOUS PROPAGANDIST AND THE DIGITAL WAKIL: AGENTIC AI AND POLITICAL COMMUNICATION IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

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Abstract

The academic discussion of artificial intelligence in communication has been dominated by the ability of Generative AI to generate content. In this paper, it is argued that a more profound disruption lies with the advent of Agentic AI - autonomous systems that can perform goal-oriented, multiple-step communication campaigns. Although existing studies on this technology are mostly Western-centric, it will have its influence depending on local political and media ecological systems. The debate will be repositioned as Global South perspective with Pakistan serving as a critical case study. We start by distinguishing between the agentic and generative paradigm and define its consequences on the communication theories of authorship, authenticity, and trust. We then speculate on how Agentic AI, in the form of a Digital Wakil (agent or representative), might perform in the highly polarized and personality-based politics of Pakistan, and the ability to provide hyper-personalized outreach and control narratives on an unprecedented scale. The paper ends with a post-human research agenda that involves an empirical study of agentic outputs, audience reception research, and comparative regulatory policy. This work presents an indispensable critical framework that can be used to understand a technology that is going to redefine political communication and democracies worldwide.

Keywords: *Agentic AI; Generative AI; Political Communication; Digital Politics; Global South; Pakistan; Artificial Intelligence; Computational Propaganda; Disinformation; Digital Sovereignty; Authenticity*

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is fundamentally changing the role of AI in political communication. The discussion is no longer about Generative AI, a sophisticated content generation tool, but about Agentic AI, which is an autonomous agent that can conduct sophisticated campaigns. This development poses urgent questions not only regarding the production of persuasion but also regarding its strategic dissemination to affect the opinion of the population, which is sometimes called computational propaganda (Bradshaw and Howard, 2019). We are now facing the ramification of AI-generated misinformation, but we must also start to contemplate the larger problem of AI as a tool that facilitates campaigns, influences relationships, and eventually changes the political landscape (Ma et al., 2025; Suktam et al., 2024).

The implementation of Agentic AI will not affect the world in the same way. It will be subjected to different socio-political dynamics, media ecosystems, and social trust organizations in the Global South, and Pakistan in particular. The ecosystem of the Pakistani media is unlike the one of the Global North, as the consumption of the media and the trust people have towards institutions are fragmented. Thus, it is essential to examine the ways in which Agentic AI can take advantage of these vulnerabilities and also find possible opportunities of engaging in democracy (Balogun et al., 2025; Guo, 2024). The present paper posits that the effects of Agentic AI need to be viewed through the localized, critical perspective. It suggests a roadmap, starting by distinguishing between

Generative and Agentic AI, examining vulnerabilities and opportunities in the Pakistani context, and finally developing a research agenda to take into account the empirical implications of this technology.

To inform this exploration, the following research questions will be discussed in this paper:

RQ1: To what extent does the conceptual transformation between Generative AI and Agentic AI put into question existing communication theories of authorship, authenticity and accountability in political discourse?

RQ2: In what specific ways could Agentic AI, conceptualized as a "Digital Wakil," operate within Pakistan's political communication landscape to influence public opinion and manage narratives?

RQ3: Which research agenda is needed to view the outputs of Agentic AI empirically, interpret the audience, inform comparative regulatory policy in the post-human politics of the Global South?

2. From Content Creator to Social Actor: Defining the Agentic AI Paradigm

The conceptual basis of the evolution of AI requires a clear understanding. Generative AI may be described as a System 1 technology. It is fast and easy to use, and it allows one to create content quickly with the help of such tools as ChatGPT and Midjourney. These systems are built to react to user inputs with patterns that have been trained on the existing data (Raisch and Krakowski, 2021). In fact, recent critical reviews have exhaustively examined the themes, ethical issues, and research gaps that exist regarding Generative AI in media communication (Nawaz and Abdul Siraj, 2025). Although very efficient, the process is essentially reactive.

An agentic AI is a breakthrough into the system 2 technology, which entails the capacity of the technology to carry out higher-order tasks like planning, reasoning, and taking multi-step actions towards the achievement of specified goals. As an illustration, an AI agent that is supposed to make a politician more active online will independently analyze the demographics of the audience, generate personal content, comment on posts, and do targeted advertising. This is a feature that enables Agentic AI to actively and independently shape political environments.

The impact on communication theory is far reaching to the point of putting into question fundamental notions of authorship, authenticity and accountability. With an AI agent writing political speech, the distinction between a human and a machine becomes unclear, and the question of the authenticity of the communication arises as well as where the responsibility of its results lies (Petersen and Almor, 2025). This change necessitates the re-evaluation of ethical models that regulate political communication (Couldry and Mejias, 2019). Moreover, since AI agents create the illusion of social presence, they can reduce the level of vigilance of users about their personal data and promote the credibility of AI-generated content (Lim and Shim, 2022; Ryan, 2020). The shift of Generative AI to Agentic AI therefore brings about a transformative era that requires multidimensional study that covers the socio-political environments these systems are governed by.

This transformation of generative tool to agentic actor is enabled by what Shoshana Zuboff (2019) calls surveillance capitalism, the logic of harvesting and extracting enormous amounts of human behavioral data as a free resource to predict and influence future behavior. Generative AI is conditioned on this enormous pool of publicly available data, yet Agentic AI is programmed to act on it in real-time. This is especially acute in the Global South context, where data is frequently

harvested by a Western platform and reused to affect the population, what Nick Couldry and Ulises Mejias (2019) refer to as data colonialism. The Digital Wakil, however, does not exist in the vacuum; is a tool that is supported by a global mechanism of information mining and poses significant questions of digital sovereignty and the neocolonial exercise of AI influence.

3. The Pakistani Digital Arena: A Fertile Ground for Agentic Politics
The digital political landscape of Pakistan is an ideal example of deploying and analyzing the application and implications of the agentic AI. There is a strong polarization and a presence of charismatic leaders in the country, who can mobilize and establish narrative dominance through the use of social media channels such as X and Facebook (Rubab, 2024). The dynamics provide a good platform on which Agentic AI can transcend passive content creation and transform into independent political players.

3.1. The Digital *Wakil* in Action: Hypothetical Scenarios
There are the following scenarios through which Agentic AI can be deployed within Pakistan:
- **Hyper-Personalization Outreach**: A political party can use the AI agent network to talk to voters in local languages (Urdu, Punjabi, Sindhi, and Pashto). Such agents might start personalized conversations based on a persona of the user, creating pseudo intimacy that may even boost the turnout of the vote (Bai et al. 2023). Using the principles and techniques of dynamic data analysis, these agents might change messages on the fly to suppress opposition or slow the spread of dissent, or to increase support for the government message.

- **Autonomous Narrative Management:** An AI agent can be tasked with the active responsibility of opposing negative narratives about government policies. For example, by detecting posts deemed important, it could trigger coordinated quick replies from various accounts, generating AI-simulated counter-arguments that give the impression of widespread public discussion, a common strategy for computational propaganda (Hartmann et al., 2023; Romele, 2022).

- **The Digital Jalsa (Rally):** AI agents would be able to arrange virtual political rallies, through social media algorithms, creating viral support of certain issues or leaders. These digital rallies might replicate the effect of grassroots mobilization, which would shape the perception of the people and pressure the adversaries without the limitations of the traditional organizing framework (Efe, 2022).

3.2. The State's Response: The Sovereign's Dilemma
The development of Agentic AI has placed the Pakistani state in a Sovereigns Dilemma. On the one hand, the state can see it as a powerful political tool and propaganda. Conversely, the technology made by the opposition groups is a severe threat to the existing sources of power (Li, 2024). This complexity may lead to various regulatory options, such as an absolute ban, AI development sponsored by the state with serious consequences in socio-political relations within the country (Rozado, 2023).

4. A Research Agenda for a Post-Human Political Sphere

This transformation cannot be accomplished without having a strong research agenda. Empirical research is required in three major areas, which are

4.1. Discourse Analysis of Agentic Outputs

The next study should be able to undertake a discourse analysis of the data produced by AI agents deployed by political parties. This can expose hidden trends, themes and ideological frames. These studies must undertake both qualitative and quantitative research approaches to evaluate the rhetorical tools applied by AI agents and how they influence voter perception by extending current studies of digital political rhetoric (Du and Chen, 2022).

4.2. Audience Reception Studies

The most critical issue is to perform reception studies regarding the perceived and trusted communication by citizens on an AI agent versus the human representatives. Factors that affect trust can be measured through experimental designs, whereas it is possible to understand how citizens respond to politically charged situations by using qualitative methods. The achievement of clarity regarding the way people interact with the AI-driven discourse is crucial to comprehend the impact it has on democratic participation in the Global South (Ricciardone, 2024).

4.3. Comparative Policy Analysis

Lastly, a comparative policy study is required to explore the emergent development of agentic system regulation in various Global South countries, including Pakistan, Nigeria and Brazil. This study may discuss alternative methods in regulating the political uses of AI, looking at the ways the states strike a balance between innovation and democracy. The experience of other nations will inform the policymakers in designing more efficient approaches to regulate the growing agency of AI.

5. Conclusion

The discussion of Agentic AI and especially through the prism of the Digital Wakil in Pakistan demonstrate the need to transition to a non-Wester-centric model. The development of an Agentic AI is a revolutionary turn in the essence of political involvement, as it puts essential issues of authorship, responsibility, and authenticity. These systems bring far-reaching implications for democracy, since they can introduce new modes of manipulation, usually detrimental to the democratic deliberation. To ensure that the political discourse is not undermined, strong transparency mechanisms and moral principles guiding the use of the Agentic AI should be in place. With the growing mediation of political discourse by autonomous non human agents, the difficulty faced by both the citizens and the stakeholders will be to ensure that human voices are not marginalized to the point of being sidelined by the democratic process. This demands the interdisciplinary response that involves research, policymaking, and civic education to emerge through the political space of the post-human realm.

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