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BETWEEN AUTOMATION AND REGULATORY CHAOS: ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN CONTEMPORARY PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND THE MEDIA SPACE

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Abstract. This article analyses the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on administration, public management, and the media. It demonstrates that AI is becoming a key factor in transforming these areas, while institutional and regulatory frameworks are not keeping pace with its development. The authors emphasise that AI can support data analysis and accelerate decision-making, but it also entails risks: misinformation, polarisation, dependence on technology, and the erosion of cognitive skills. The presented study employed a mixed approach (expert interviews, content analysis, and case studies). The results indicate that AI is perceived as a technology with great potential, but its systemic implementation in Poland is lacking, especially in public administration. In diplomacy, AI can support analysis and automation, but it cannot replace human relationships. Experts call for the development of digital skills, transparency of algorithms, and international cooperation on AI regulations.

Keywords: artificial intelligence; public administration; governance; decision automation.

INTRODUCTION

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become one of the key drivers of social and political transformation over the past decade. Its growing presence in the public sector, political communication, and decision-making poses new challenges for states in terms of security, ethics, administrative efficiency, and the legitimacy of governance. AI affects both microprocesses (e.g. document processing) and macrostructures of power (e.g. geopolitical use of data). As Floridi notes, AI has become the cornerstone of a new 'infosphere' in which individuals, institutions, and technologies co-create a new epistemic order [Floridi 2021]. In international relations, AI is analysed as a factor in changing the

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nature of power [Taddeo and Floridi 2018], as an intelligence tool or as an element of geopolitical rivalry [Lee 2018].

The revolutionary progress of information and communication technologies (ICT), which some state systems in the social and legal spheres are struggling to keep pace with, has a considerable impact on political and social systems and on state administration. The use and dissemination of AI in public diplomacy and discourse in a changing world is steadily increasing. Analysing and examining the impact of AI on political and social life, state administration, and the media is essential for understanding trends and the need to adapt implementation mechanisms.

This article draws on interdisciplinary research on the current applications of artificial intelligence (AI), its potential functions, and the risks associated with its use in politics, public administration, and the media. This topic is gaining particular significance in light of the growing role of AI in decision-making, shaping political messages, and transforming the functioning of public institutions and international relations.

A review of the literature reveals a significant research gap: holistic approaches that integrate these three sectors and analyse their interrelationships in the context of AI technology development are lacking. Therefore, the main objective of this study was to identify the mechanisms of AI use and analyse their effects (both beneficial and adverse) on state structures, political processes, and the information space.

Accordingly, three research questions were formulated: 1) What uses of AI can be observed today in politics, administration, and the media? 2) What opportunities and threats are associated with these uses? 3) What regulatory and ethical strategies are necessary to ensure the sustainable development of AI in these sectors?

The study was qualitative and relied on content analysis, expert interviews, and case studies. In addition, the results of a survey of administrative, media, and diplomatic circles were used. The interviews revealed both practical uses of AI and dilemmas related to process automation, data analysis, countering disinformation, and shaping political decisions.

The collected data provided a better understanding of the complexity of the challenges associated with implementing AI in key areas of state and social life. At the same time, these enabled the formulation of recommendations for a more responsible, transparent, and strategic approach to developing this technology.

1. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study underlying this article was designed to capture the tensions between the growing automation of institutional processes and the mismatch

between regulatory frameworks and the pace of AI development. To this end, a mixed-methods approach was used, combining qualitative and quantitative research techniques. A key component was qualitative analysis, supplemented by quantitative mapping of AI functions and applications in the public administration, diplomacy, and media sectors.

The primary research tool was a focus group interview (FGI), conducted online on 16 June 2025. Five experts from the diplomatic, administrative, and security communities were interviewed: former and current ambassadors, officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, an honorary consul, and a member of the uniformed services. The deliberate selection of experts enabled us to gain in-depth knowledge of AI implementation practices, prevailing narratives, and perceptions related to risks, opportunities, and institutional barriers.

The interviews were supplemented by an analysis of key strategic documents, including the European Union's AI Act, OECD and UNESCO recommendations, UN reports, and national digital strategies from leading AI countries. This made it possible to place the experts' opinions in a broader regulatory context and compare them with existing and proposed legal standards.

The research tools included discourse analysis, which helped to capture how experts interpret the impact of AI on the functioning of the state, the media, and social structures. Functional mapping enabled the organisation of AI applications across key sectors, while cross-sectoral mapping enabled the identification of common patterns, differences, and points of conflict between technology and institutional reality.

The study also had a diagnostic dimension, demonstrating, among other things, that the development of AI is outpacing institutions' ability to understand, regulate, and implement it in a controlled manner. Methodological limitations are mainly due to the small sample size and limited data access in areas subject to state secrecy (including security infrastructure). Due to the sensitive nature of some AI uses, some information could not be disclosed.

Despite these limitations, the adopted methodology captured the dynamic landscape of AI implementations across the public and media sectors. In particular, it has made it possible to identify areas where automation is outpacing the regulatory tools, which has serious consequences. The study thus contributes to the debate on the need to balance technological innovation with institutional responsibility.

2. AI AND PUBLIC GOVERNANCE – ALGORITHMIC GOVERNANCE AND DIGITAL BUREAUCRACY

The literature on the application of AI in administration focuses on algorithmic governance and digital bureaucracy [Katzenbach and Ulbricht

2019]. Wirtz et al. identify AI's potential to increase the efficiency of public services and reduce costs, but warn of its pitfalls: lack of transparency, risk of discrimination, and skill gaps [Wirtz et al. 2019]. Bullock, as well as Kuziemski and Misuraca note that algorithmic opacity hinders accountability [Bullock 2019; Kuziemski and Misuraca 2020]. O'Neil and Eubanks present examples in which AI reproduced social prejudices [O'Neil 2016; Eubanks 2018]. Legal issues and the lack of a regulatory framework further complicate the implementation of AI in public administration.

Generative AI models enable mass content creation, raising concerns about the reliability of sources and the spread of misinformation [Kreps and Kriner 2023]. Deepfakes pose a serious threat to public confidence [Chesney and Citron 2019a], and content personalisation algorithms lead to the creation of information bubbles [Pariser 2011; Cinelli et al. 2021] and polarisation [Sunstein 2017]. AI also amplifies influence operations, including the activities of bots and trolls [Woolley and Howard 2018]. The idea of points to the deliberate manipulation of people's perceptions using AI and big data, which, as researchers highlight, can undermine the foundations of democracy [Coeckelbergh 2023].[1]

There are already legal regulations in place that aim to ensure the sustainable development of artificial intelligence. The UNESCO Recommendation[2] establishes an ethical framework for AI based on the values of human rights, the common good, inclusiveness, and fairness. The EU AI Act (2024) establishes legally binding risk categories and obligations for AI system developers, promoting a trust-based approach. The OECD Recommendations,[3] on the other hand, outline five key principles for AI development: societal benefit, respect for rights, transparency, safety, and accountability. All three documents emphasise the need to balance innovation and the protection of democratic values.

Although there is a great deal of research on AI in individual sectors (administration, politics, media), there is a lack of cross-sectoral approaches. Bano et al. stress the need to integrate research on AI in different public spheres to better understand their interconnections and effects [Bano et al. 2025]. Disinformation, policy, and regulations do not operate in isolation, and an integrated approach can help develop comprehensive AI governance strategies.

The respondents highlighted that AI enables automation of routine administrative tasks, such as press analysis, media reviews, summaries, and preliminary data analysis, thereby reducing the workload of civil servants and diplomats in their daily work. This is consistent with the findings of Wirtz, Weyerer, and Geyer, who argue that AI improves efficiency and allows human resources to be shifted to tasks requiring social skills [Wirtz et

[1] NATO Innovation Hub, *Cognitive Warfare. Allied Command Transformation*, 2020.
[2] UNESCO, *Recommendation on the Ethics of AI*, 2021.
[3] OECD, *Recommendation of the Council on Artificial Intelligence*, 2019.

al. 2019]. The literature, especially the algorithmic governance, emphasises that automation can support public decision-making through predictive analytics, cost reduction, and process acceleration [Katzenbach and Ulbricht 2019; Kuziemski and Misuraca 2020]. The FGI pointed out that algorithms can predict political phenomena based on banking or insurance data, which is part of the global trend of data-driven policy-making.

Respondents also indicated that AI could replace traditional intelligence tools in the future, analysing large data sets faster and more comprehensively than humans. Similar observations appear in the literature, for example, in Omand and Phythian, who describe big data as the new foundation of intelligence analytics [Omand and Phythian 2018]. Simultaneously, FGI experts expressed doubts about the security of such solutions; among their concerns was filtering of sensitive information by foreign servers, which aligns with the analyses of Hasselbalch, who warns against data geopolitics and the risk of AI being used by third parties [Hasselbalch 2021].

The literature increasingly refers to the 'algorithmisation of politics', in which decisions are supported or even replaced by automated recommendations [Bullock 2019]. The respondents pointed out the risk of eliminating the human factor and leaving decisions to algorithms, which may lead to legitimacy and political accountability issues. These concerns resonate with the now-classic criticism of O'Neil and Eubanks, who argue that algorithms, while seemingly neutral, reproduce existing inequalities and can exacerbate the democratic deficit in politics [O'Neil 2016; Eubanks 2018].

Respondents agreed that AI intensifies polarisation, content personalisation, and the locking of people into information bubbles, increasing the risk of manipulation and political influence from third countries. This observation fits into the extensive literature on information filters [Pariser 2011], algorithm-driven extreme content [Sunstein 2017], and computational propaganda [Woolley and Howard 2018].

Particularly interesting is the respondents' reference to cognitive warfare, understood as a battle for public perception, emotions, and cognitive processes. This concept is developed, among others, by Marsili (2023) and in NATO reports.[4] The respondents accurately pointed out that AI – especially generative AI – enables 'mind attacks' through manipulated images, deepfakes, targeted adverts, and narratives tailored to specific psychological profiles.

The participants in the study repeatedly emphasised the danger of 'thoughtless copying' of AI-generated content, especially among younger generations (e.g. using AI to write essays, speeches, or even official documents). This is consistent with Coeckelbergh's (2023) concerns, who highlights that AI may lead to the erosion of cognitive skills and dependence on automated tools.

[4] NATO Innovation Hub, *Cognitive Warfare. Allied Command Transformation*, 2020.

The FGI results emphasise that AI can take over some analytical tasks, but it cannot replace the interpersonal relationships that underpin diplomacy – from gathering information to building political coalitions. This is consistent with the literature on digital diplomacy, which indicates that technologies are tools rather than replacements for diplomats as relational actors [Hocking et al. 2012; Rana 2020].

The literature describes AI as a new area of geopolitical rivalry, in which countries compete for regulatory standards (EU AI Act), control over data flows, and technological competence [Bano et al. 2025]. Respondents raised similar concerns, including the need for closed, secure AI models, the imbalance between countries using AI and those lagging, and dependence on foreign technology platforms. At the same time, both literature and research findings point to the risk of dehumanisation of political processes, the disappearance of personal responsibility, the loss of cognitive skills by the public and civil servants, and potential mass unemployment in the administration sector. Respondents fear the dehumanisation of public decision-making, the transfer of responsibility to algorithms, and the frustration of young people deprived of jobs as a result of automation. In literature, this problem is known as 'black box governance' [Kreps and Kriner 2023], in which political decision-makers rely on systems whose operations they do not understand.

3. AMBIVALENCE TOWARDS AI – BETWEEN TECHNO-OPTIMISM AND TECHNO-FEAR

The ambivalent attitude of experts reflects the state of research on the perception of AI in society and the public sector. The findings confirm Wyatt's observations that every major technology inspires both fascination and fear [Wyatt 2008]. On the one hand, experts talk about an all-encompassing revolution that cannot be stopped, while on the other hand, they see threats such as dehumanisation, the dominance of digital platforms, and a decline in social skills: a) "I think the most important thing is [...] not to let yourself be dehumanised;" b) "The thoughtless copying can be dangerous... we will become lazy."

This ambivalence is also reflected in the literature on autonomous technologies [Bostrom 2014], which highlights the discrepancy between the benefits and risks of automating cognitive and decision-making processes.

Our experts devoted considerable attention to public administration in their statements. A particularly interesting finding of the study is the exposure of an 'algorithmic grey area'. It involves using AI without formal security policies, transferring analytical work to commercial systems, risking breaches of the GDPR and professional secrecy, and a lack of managerial oversight. This issue is not widely described in the literature, and most studies focus on systemic

implementations (e.g. Estonia). However, this study reveals bottom-up, uncontrolled AI adaptations, pointing to serious governance issues in Poland.

At the same time, respondents mentioned a number of benefits associated with the use of AI in public administration. These include automating office work, integrating public data, faster responses to citizens' requests, minimising human error, and improving the accessibility of services for older individuals. These insights are confirmed by OECD reports, which indicate that AI can improve the quality of public services, provided it is implemented responsibly.[5]

At the same time, it should be emphasised that artificial intelligence also offers significant opportunities to improve the functioning of public administration. In the literature, AI is increasingly perceived as a tool supporting the development of more efficient, responsive, and citizen-centred public services [Margetts and Dorobantu 2019].[6] The automation of routine administrative tasks, such as document processing, data classification, correspondence management, and the preparation of analyses, can reduce bureaucratic burdens and enable public sector employees to focus more on tasks requiring social, expert, and strategic competencies.

Through the analysis of large datasets and the identification of patterns that are difficult to detect using traditional analytical methods, artificial intelligence can also support decision-making processes. As a result, public administration gains the ability to make decisions that are increasingly evidence-based. This may contribute to more effective public policy planning, improved resource management, and the earlier identification of potential social and economic risks.

Another important area of benefit is the increased accessibility of public services. AI-powered tools, including intelligent digital assistants, automated translation systems, and solutions supporting communication for people with disabilities, can facilitate interactions between citizens and public institutions while reducing barriers related to age, disability, or language differences. Consequently, artificial intelligence can contribute to greater inclusiveness within public administration and enhance the quality of citizen services.

From the perspective of public administration and diplomacy, therefore, the challenge does not lie in the use of artificial intelligence itself. Rather, it lies in establishing legal, organisational, and ethical frameworks that maximise the benefits of AI while simultaneously mitigating risks related to transparency, accountability, and the protection of citizens' rights.

However, a catalogue of threats has also been created, which can be divided into three levels: (1) micro level: lack of employee skills (digital illiteracy),

[5] OECD, *AI in the Public Sector*, 2021.

[6] Ibid.

(2) meso level: lack of institutional guidelines, (3) macro level: lack of national and European regulations.

This stratification of threats is consistent with Zuboff's proposals, who suggests that data technologies undermine the foundations of traditional administration [Zuboff 2019].

One of the most striking findings of this study is the existence of informal, bottom-up practices of using AI in administration, especially among younger employees and by uniformed services. This development fits into the concept of an 'algorithmic grey area', where technologies are used despite the absence of a formal legal and procedural framework.

Experts described this practice rather alarmingly: a) "They copy anything into ChatGPT, including indictments;" b) "Most local authorities do not have any cybersecurity policies in place."

This means that Poland is at what the literature refers to as the pre-regulatory stage, where the use of AI is ahead of data protection policies, ethical, and organisational standards.[7]

At the same time, public administration faces significant opportunities: "Government agencies will use AI, given the significant benefits it can bring."

These conclusions suggest that the implementation of AI is inevitable, while it is crucial to build competence and introduce regulations to protect data and the state's interests.

4. AI IN THE MEDIA: THE MEDIA AS A SPACE FOR ALGORITHMIC POWER AND COGNITIVE WARFARE

Another area where AI plays a significant role is the media. The experts we surveyed described social media as political actors, which is reflected in the literature on platform governance [Gillespie 2018]. It was pointed out that these platforms not only moderate content but also actively generate it through algorithmic recommendations. This reinforces political extremes, locks users into information bubbles, and takes over the traditional media's role. These findings correspond with the conclusions of Sunstein and Pariser [Sunstein 2017; Pariser 2011].

Experts have signalled that AI creates new opportunities for generating multimedia manipulation. Chesney and Citron indicate that deepfakes can destroy trust in public institutions and, on a geopolitical scale, destabilise electoral processes. This is consistent with our research findings [Chesney and Citron 2019b].

[7] OECD, *Education at a Glance 2021*, 2021.

The study participants also mentioned cognitive warfare.[8] In their view, with its capacity to generate personalised content, AI is becoming a highly potent tool in this type of conflict.

AI is revolutionising the way public institutions and the media operate. Depending on how it is used, it can become a tool for strengthening democracy and state efficiency, or a threat to freedom, civil rights, and pluralism of information. Responsible management of the development and implementation of this technology will be crucial. In recent years, AI has been rapidly changing how key areas of management, communication, and decision-making function, opening up new opportunities and creating numerous ethical, technological, and legal challenges.

The survey results indicate that experts are particularly aware of the risks associated with the use of AI in the media and information space. According to their assessments: a) "Algorithms can lock us into information bubbles;" b) "Whoever runs Facebook, X, or TikTok may have more influence on elections than governments."

These statements support the position of Sunstein and Pariser regarding the polarising role of social media [Sunstein 2017; Pariser 2011]. They also suggest transforming digital platforms into 'quasi-political entities' [Gillespie 2018] that have a real impact on public opinion and democratic processes.

In the context of information security, experts identify cognitive warfare, which is described in the literature [Lerner 2023] as a new dimension of conflict focused on perception and cognitive processes: "There is increasing talk of cognitive warfare – a war for the minds."

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis revealed that artificial intelligence (AI) has the potential to transform the system for managing, transmitting, and generating information, as well as the functioning of society. However, progress within public administration has been limited. Although the implementation of artificial intelligence in public administration is gaining momentum, the deployment of personalised, cost-effective, and efficient intelligent public services will take longer.

The use of AI in public administration raises ethical tensions concerning integrity, transparency, privacy, and human rights. Currently, the literature lacks a contextual and process-based understanding of the implementation and dissemination of AI in public administration to examine these tensions. Earlier research has highlighted the risks, benefits, and challenges associated

[8] NATO Innovation Hub, *Cognitive Warfare. Allied Command Transformation*, 2020.

with the use of AI in public administration. However, there remains a significant gap in understanding the tensions surrounding AI in the context of public value creation. A literature review identifies technological, organisational, and environmental contextual variables, as well as absorptive capacity, as factors influencing the implementation of AI.

Hence, there is a notable dissonance associated with AI from the perspective of its implementation and widespread use in public administration. However, at every stage of administrative activities, AI can bring highly complementary benefits, such as automating mundane and repetitive tasks, improving productivity in analytical or creative tasks, tailoring services to the needs of citizens, tailoring approaches to strengthen the civil service, improving decision-making and understanding of the present, better forecasting of the future, improving information management and accessibility, detecting irregular transactions, and assessing the risk of integrity breaches.

Analysis of the study data leads to the conclusion that AI is becoming a key factor in transforming administration, both mentally and practically, as well as the way the media operates. However, its use requires considerable caution, as artificial intelligence can increase the efficiency of government operations, but it needs regulation and education. In the public media sector, it has been noted that AI offers new potential and opportunities, revolutionising the way these tools function. However, alongside this development, many threats posed by AI in the information space are being recognised, including the manipulation and restriction of reliable information and the media capture and bias.

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