

From Unfulfilled Manifestos to Machine-Generated Promises: AI as a Tool of Populist Politics in Nigeria's 2027 Elections in view.

Mathew Segun Ogunleye, Samuel Ayodele Bello

Political Science Department, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100801011>

Received: 09 September 2026; Accepted: 14 September 2026; Published: 23 September 2026

ABSTRACT

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly transforming political communication, creating new possibilities for the production, adaptation, personalisation and circulation of electoral messages. In Nigeria, this development emerges within a political environment already characterised by unfulfilled electoral promises, weak political institutions, public distrust and populist mobilisation. While electoral promises traditionally provide citizens with a basis for evaluating political leaders and demanding accountability, AI-generated political content introduces a new challenge by making it possible to produce and circulate promises that may not originate from candidates themselves. This study examines the transition from unfulfilled manifestos to machine-generated promises and the use of AI as a tool of populist politics in Nigeria's 2027 elections. The study employed qualitative content analysis, relying on secondary data drawn from peer-reviewed journal articles, government and electoral documents, institutional reports, policy papers and credible media sources. Findings indicate that AI can strengthen populist communication by converting existing public grievances into rapidly produced, personalised and emotionally appealing electoral messages. The study further finds that AI-generated promises may stimulate political engagement while simultaneously creating an authenticity gap that complicates political accountability, governance and informed democratic choice. The study concludes that AI represents an emerging dimension of electoral politics in Nigeria and recommends stronger digital information-integrity mechanisms, authoritative political communication, civic media literacy and responsible use of AI to protect democratic accountability.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Machine-Generated Promises, Populism, Electoral Promises, Political Accountability, Nigerian Democracy, 2027 Elections

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria's democratic experience since 1999 presents a paradox that is central to understanding the country's contemporary electoral politics. On the one hand, electoral competition has provided a formal mechanism through which citizens can periodically choose political leaders and express preferences over alternative programmes of government. However, the institutions expected to translate electoral preferences into sustained political representation have remained weak. Nigerian elections are consequently often marked by ambitious political promises, with candidates and parties presenting programmes intended to appeal to citizens and demonstrate their capacity to address major social and economic problems. Such promises matter because they provide voters with a basis for judging political leaders after elections (Thomson, 2011; Heinisch, 2023). Yet the persistence of unfulfilled campaign promises has become an important feature of Nigeria's electoral politics, contributing to political dissatisfaction, declining trust and a weakening relationship between citizens and government (Omilusi, 2020; Towoju & Lambe, 2025). The problem is therefore deeper than the conduct of elections themselves. It concerns the quality of the political relationship established between citizens, political parties and governing elites.

Where political parties are weakly institutionalised, political competition becomes less about competing programmes and more about personalities, elite alliances and the mobilisation of social grievances. Madueke (2026) captures this condition by showing that Nigerian parties have increasingly been shaped by personalistic, clientelistic and elite-centred networks rather than functioning consistently as institutions that aggregate citizens'

interests and translate them into coherent programmes. This institutional weakness creates an important opening for populist politics because where conventional political institutions fail to provide credible channels for representation, political actors can gain support by claiming to speak directly for “the people” against an established political class.

The emergence of populist politics in this context should therefore not be understood simply as a change in political rhetoric. It represents a response to a crisis of representation when citizens perceive political institutions as distant, corrupt, ineffective or incapable of addressing persistent problems, the distinction between “the people” and “the elite” becomes politically useful (Ogunleye, 2026). Populist actors can transform widespread grievances into an antagonistic political narrative in which ordinary citizens are presented as the legitimate source of political authority while established elites are blamed for social and economic failures. The anti-elite, anti-establishment and anti-corruption dimensions of populist politics consequently derive much of their appeal from existing institutional dissatisfaction (Ogunleye, 2026). Research on Nigeria’s electoral politics similarly indicates that populist and anti-populist messages have become important features of contemporary campaign communication, including during the 2023 presidential election (İşeri, Ahmad, Mete, & Ersoy, 2025). The political strength of populism lies in its capacity to convert diffuse dissatisfaction into a simple political choice: support the candidate who claims to represent the people or remain under the control of the political establishment.

The electoral promise is one of the principal mechanisms through which this populist relationship is constructed. A political promise does not merely communicate what a candidate intends to do after winning an election; it establishes a relationship of expectation between the candidate and the electorate. The promise tells citizens that their grievances have been recognised and that a particular political actor possesses the capacity and commitment to resolve them. This is why manifestos are important to democratic accountability: they provide a formal expression of the priorities and commitments upon which citizens can evaluate competing political alternatives. This creates the first major contradiction at the centre of Nigeria’s electoral politics: the political value of a promise may be highest before an election, while its accountability value becomes most important after the election. Political actors therefore have incentives to make promises that are electorally attractive, while voters have to bear the consequences when those promises are not translated into governance outcomes.

The resulting gap between manifesto and performance can generate a cycle of political dissatisfaction. Citizens demand change because existing leaders have failed to meet expectations; political actors respond by presenting themselves as alternatives to the established political class; the new actors make ambitious promises and mobilise popular grievances; once incorporated into governing structures, however, they may reproduce aspects of the same elite behaviour they previously condemned (Ogunleye, 2026). The failure of promises then becomes another source of public dissatisfaction, creating the conditions for the next round of anti-establishment mobilisation. This cycle is particularly important for understanding populism because populism can reproduce itself through the very failures it claims to correct. Public grievance produces anti-elite mobilisation; anti-elite mobilisation produces electoral promises; electoral victory produces access to the political establishment; incorporation into that establishment generates new grievances when promises remain unfulfilled.

The communication environment within which this process occurs is now changing; political actors no longer depend entirely on party rallies, traditional media and conventional campaign structures to communicate with voters. Social media has created opportunities for political actors to communicate directly with large audiences, while political messages can be circulated rapidly, repeatedly and increasingly in forms adapted to particular audiences. Research suggests that these characteristics make digital platforms particularly important to populist politics because they facilitate direct communication, emotional appeals, political mobilisation and personalised relationships between leaders and followers (Yilmaz, Bliuc, Norrie, Smith, Smith, Evans, Courtney, & Barnett 2026). Consequently, political promises are no longer confined to formal manifestos, campaign rallies or television speeches. They can be continuously reproduced, reframed and circulated across digital platforms.

This transformation is particularly significant because digital platforms do not merely provide new channels through which political actors communicate. They also introduce mechanisms of algorithmic selection, personalisation and amplification. Populist communication is especially compatible with digital environments that reward emotionally charged simplified and polarising narratives. Brautović, Roško, Tošović, and John

(2026) describe this development through the concept of algorithmic populism, drawing attention to the interaction between political actors, digital platforms, algorithms and users in the production and circulation of populist messages. The analytical significance of this development is that technology can alter the conditions under which populist messages are produced, selected, adapted and encountered by citizens. Brautović et al. (2026) identify this shift from amplification towards production, adaptation and amplification as a major transformation in algorithmic populism. The political communication problem therefore moves from the question of *how far a promise can travel* to the question of *how many different versions of a promise can be produced, for whom, and according to which perceived grievance or political identity*.

Traditionally, campaign communication generally presents a relatively common manifesto or programme to a broad electorate, even when parties subsequently emphasise particular issues in their appeals to different groups. AI-assisted communication potentially makes this differentiation far more flexible. A political actor may communicate the same broad political objective through different narratives designed around different social experiences. In a country characterised by substantial socioeconomic, regional, ethnic and linguistic differences, this capacity has considerable political significance. Okpaka (2026) demonstrates that AI-mediated political communication can operate across Nigeria's linguistic and multi-ethnic environment and can facilitate targeted political messaging. The analytical implication is that AI can potentially connect political grievance to political messaging with greater precision: the technology can help generate or adapt the narrative most likely to resonate with a particular audience and reproduce that narrative rapidly across digital spaces.

The distinction between misinformation and machine-generated promises is consequently important. Existing studies (Łabuz & Nehring, 2024; Madueke, 2026; Ogunleye, 2026; Brautović et al., 2026; Okpaka, 2026) has understandably focused heavily on the ability of AI to create deepfakes, fabricate political statements and circulate disinformation. Łabuz and Nehring (2024), for example, demonstrate how the declining cost and increasing accessibility of synthetic media have expanded opportunities for electoral manipulation, while also cautioning against exaggerated claims that artificial intelligence will automatically produce an "information apocalypse." Their concept of information pollution is particularly useful because it shifts attention from individual falsehoods towards the broader deterioration of the political information environment. Okpaka (2026) similarly demonstrates how AI-mediated electoral manipulation can exploit ethnic and regional identities, while Agency Report (2026) reports INEC Chairman Joash Amupitan's warning that AI-driven disinformation and algorithmic micro-targeting could threaten the credibility of Nigeria's 2027 elections.

These studies reveal important risks associated with AI-enabled electoral communication, but they leave another political possibility less explored: what happens when AI is used not primarily to invent a false statement about an opponent, but to produce a more convincing promise about what a candidate intends to do for the electorate? This question shifts the analytical focus from synthetic deception to synthetic persuasion. A promise does not have to be demonstrably false to be politically problematic. Its significance may lie in how it is generated, tailored and presented to different citizens, particularly where voters receive different versions of a candidate's political commitments and have limited opportunities to compare those messages across groups.

Agency Report (2026) provides an important indication of this emerging problem through its discussion of algorithmic micro-targeting. According to INEC Chairman Amupitan, AI allows political messages to be directed towards specific segments of the electorate, creating the possibility that different groups receive different political messages. While the immediate concern raised by INEC is electoral disinformation, the same technological architecture has implications for electoral promises. If political messages can be targeted according to audience characteristics, then promises can potentially be adjusted to the concerns of particular groups. The technology therefore introduces a new layer into the politics of expectation: political actors may no longer need to persuade a heterogeneous electorate with one uniform representation of their programme when they can construct multiple persuasive narratives around the same political ambition.

This possibility is especially important because political trust depends partly on citizens' ability to establish what political actors have committed themselves to doing. When campaign messages become highly personalised and rapidly generated, the basis for subsequent accountability may become blurred. A candidate can potentially be judged by one group according to one set of promises and by another group according to a different set. The traditional democratic relationship between promise, expectation and accountability is consequently placed

under new pressure. The central problem is no longer only whether politicians fulfil their manifestos; it becomes whether citizens can establish which promises were made to whom in the first place. Madueke's (2026) analysis suggests that the underlying crisis predates current AI technologies: weak parties, elite capture and declining confidence in political institutions have already created conditions in which citizens seek alternative forms of political representation. Similarly, Łabuz and Nehring (2024) cautioned against assuming that the existence of synthetic media automatically translates into electoral outcomes. The analytical proposition of this study is therefore more specific. AI matters because it enters an already existing political environment characterised by distrust, grievance, populist mobilisation and recurring disappointment with electoral promises. Its significance lies in the new capacities it provides political actors to operate within that environment.

The 2027 general elections consequently represent more than another electoral contest in Nigeria. They provide an opportunity to examine whether the country's longstanding politics of promises is entering a new technological phase. The central issue is not simply whether Nigerian politicians will use AI, nor whether AI-generated disinformation will circulate during the election. The more fundamental question is whether AI will change the production logic of populist electoral promises. If traditional populism relied on the political actor's ability to identify a common grievance and construct a broad appeal around it, AI may permit that process to become increasingly automated, differentiated and personalised. The political entrepreneur could potentially move from addressing "the people" as a relatively broad collective to addressing multiple imagined publics, each with its own grievances, expectations and version of the political promise.

This raises a fundamental question about the future of electoral accountability in Nigeria. If the historical problem has been the failure to fulfil promises contained in manifestos, the emergence of AI introduces a potentially more complex problem: the capacity to generate promises in forms that are continually adapted to the expectations of different voters. The political challenge may therefore move from unfulfilled manifestos to machine-generated promises. The former concerns the gap between what politicians promise and what they deliver; the latter concerns the technological capacity to produce, personalise and circulate promises before delivery becomes the subject of accountability.

It is against this background that this study examines AI as a tool of populist politics in Nigeria's 2027 elections. The study is concerned with how the convergence of populist political incentives and generative technologies may transform electoral promise-making, particularly through the production, adaptation and targeting of political narratives. It advances the argument that the significance of AI for Nigerian democracy should not be reduced to deepfakes and disinformation. While those dangers remain substantial, the more consequential analytical question is whether AI can make populist promise-making more scalable, more personalised and more difficult to hold politically accountable. For instances many of the videos circulated during 2023 general election are still yet to be verified and authenticated. In this sense, Nigeria's 2027 elections provide a critical setting for examining whether technological innovation will merely change the medium through which politicians make familiar promises or whether it will fundamentally alter the production, distribution and political meaning of the electoral promise itself.

This paper raises vital questions such as:

1. How is Artificial Intelligence transforming the production of populist electoral promises in Nigeria?
2. What are the implications of AI-generated promises for political accountability, governance and democracy in Nigeria's 2027 elections?

These questions constitute the central focus of the paper, which examines the movement from the longstanding problem of unfulfilled manifestos to the emerging possibility of AI-generated promises and the use of AI as a tool of populist politics in Nigeria's 2027 elections. To address these questions, the paper is organised into four sections. The first section provides a general introduction to populist politics, electoral promises and Artificial Intelligence in Nigeria. The second section reviews the relevant concepts and related literature and establishes the theoretical foundation for understanding algorithmic populism and AI-enabled political communication. The third section presents the methods adopted for the study. The final section presents and discusses the findings and conclusion.

Conceptual Clarification

Populism

Populism is a political approach that presents society as divided between “the people” and “the elite.” Mudde (2004) explains populism as an ideology that sees ordinary people as a unified and morally legitimate group, while political elites are presented as corrupt or disconnected from their interests. Populist politics therefore often involves a promise to return political power to ordinary citizens and to challenge an established political class (Ogunleye, 2026). This makes populism particularly important during elections, when politicians seek to connect with voters by speaking about their everyday problems and presenting themselves as the people’s voice. However, populism should not simply be equated with emotional speeches, ambitious promises or criticism of government. Its central feature is the way political actors construct the relationship between ordinary citizens, political elites and the “general will” of the people (Mudde, 2004). In this sense, electoral promises can become an important part of populist politics because promises of jobs, better education, improved security, economic transformation or an end to corruption can be used to demonstrate that a candidate understands the needs of ordinary citizens.

In contemporary politics, the rise of social media has given populist new opportunities. Political actors can now communicate directly with voters, respond quickly to public concerns and spread political messages without depending entirely on traditional media. A recent systematic review of 188 studies found that digital platforms have become important spaces for populist communication because they encourage personalisation, emotional communication, mobilisation and direct interaction between political leaders and their supporters (Yilmaz et al., 2026). This development is also visible in Nigeria, where research on the 2023 presidential election identified both populist and anti-populist forms of political communication and showed how digital platforms were used to communicate these messages (İşeri et al., 2025). Populism is therefore not only about what politicians say, but also about how they communicate with citizens and present themselves as representatives of the people. This is important to the present study because changes in political communication, particularly the emergence of artificial intelligence, may provide new ways for political actors to create, personalise and distribute populist messages and promises to different groups of voters.

Unfulfilled Manifestos

An electoral manifesto is a document through which a political party or candidate presents its major policies, programmes and promises to voters before an election. It gives citizens an opportunity to understand what political actors intend to do if elected and provides a basis for judging their performance after the election. Electoral promises are therefore closely connected to democratic accountability because citizens can compare what was promised with what was actually delivered (Thomson, 2011; Heinisch, 2023). Unfulfilled manifestos refer to situations where political promises contained in campaign programmes or manifestos are not implemented, are only partly implemented, or are abandoned after a political party or candidate gains power. The problem is important because voters do not simply evaluate politicians based on their promises; they also assess whether those promises are kept. Experimental evidence shows that fulfilled election pledges can strengthen citizens’ trust in government, while broken pledges can reduce such trust (Heinisch, 2023). Similarly, research shows that citizens generally expect governing parties to make efforts to fulfill their electoral commitments, making promise fulfillment an important part of the relationship between voters and elected governments (Heinisch, 2023).

In Nigeria, the issue of unfulfilled electoral promises has remained an important concern in discussions of political accountability. Political parties and candidates often campaign with ambitious commitments on employment, education, electricity, security, infrastructure and economic development, but the realities of governance may produce significant gaps between these promises and actual outcomes. Omilusi (2020), in his study of campaign communication during Nigeria’s 2019 general elections, identified unfulfilled party pledges as a continuing problem and linked the issue to weak voter engagement and the absence of a strong social contract between political actors and citizens. More recent research also points to institutional, financial and administrative constraints as factors that can make it difficult for governments to fulfil electoral commitments (Towoju & Lambe, 2025). Unfulfilled promises can consequently create disappointment and weaken citizens’

confidence in political institutions, while also providing political opponents with material for accusing governing elites of failing the people.

AI as Political Tools

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers broadly to technologies that enable computer systems to perform tasks that normally require human intelligence, such as analysing information, generating content, recognising patterns and making predictions. In politics, AI is increasingly becoming a useful tool for communication, campaign organisation and voter engagement. AI can produce text, images, audio and video quickly, while data-driven systems can help political actors understand audiences and tailor messages to particular groups. Recent research shows that AI is already being considered and used in election campaigns for activities such as campaign operations and voter outreach, although citizens tend to be more concerned when AI is used deceptively (Jungherr et al., 2026). AI can also support personalised political communication by helping campaign organisations produce and deliver different messages to different audiences (Biały, 2025; Rauchfleisch et al., 2025). Used responsibly, these tools may improve voter education, make campaign communication more efficient and help political actors respond more quickly to issues raised by citizens. Nigerian research similarly identifies possible positive applications of AI in elections, including voter education, political communication and electoral administration (Tajudeen, 2025; Bisong et al., 2025).

Machine-Generated Promises

The concept of machine-generated promises in this study refers to political promises, campaign messages, policy claims and political narratives that are produced, modified or personalised with the assistance of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Unlike the traditional political manifesto, which normally presents a relatively fixed set of commitments to the electorate, AI-assisted political communication can allow campaign organisations to produce large amounts of content quickly and adapt messages to different audiences. Recent studies show that generative AI is increasingly becoming part of political communication, including the production of campaign materials, automated messaging and personalised political content (Jungherr et al., 2026; Biały, 2025; Rauchfleisch et al., 2025). In this study, therefore, “machine-generated promises” is proposed as an analytical concept for understanding how AI may change the traditional process of political promise-making. A politician or campaign team could, for example, use AI to generate different versions of a campaign promise for young people, workers, students, rural communities or urban voters, while maintaining the same broad political objective. The important difference is that the promise is no longer necessarily communicated as one fixed message to the entire electorate; it can become more flexible, targeted and continuously reproduced. Populist communication often depends on presenting political actors as representatives of ordinary citizens and responding directly to their concerns (Mudde, 2004; Yilmaz et al., 2026).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Populism, Political Representation and the Politics of Electoral Promises

The literature on populism provides an important starting point for understanding the relationship between political representation, electoral promises and the changing character of political communication in Nigeria. Populism is commonly understood as a thin-centred ideology that constructs politics around a distinction between “the people” and “the elite” (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017). This distinction is particularly relevant to Nigeria, where political competition has often been shaped by dissatisfaction with political elites, economic hardship, institutional weaknesses and declining confidence in representative institutions. Ogunleye (2026) argues that populist politics in Nigeria develops within the tension between the ideals of democracy and the realities of elite-dominated governance. Political actors can present themselves as defenders of ordinary people and critics of the ruling establishment, while reproducing similar practices after gaining political power. Populism therefore becomes closely connected with the expectations created during election campaigns and the subsequent gap between political promises and government performance.

Madueke (2026) observes that Nigerian political parties remain weakly institutionalised, ideologically incoherent and strongly influenced by personalistic, ethnoregional and clientelistic networks. Rather than functioning consistently as institutions that aggregate interests, recruit political actors and structure political

competition, parties frequently operate as vehicles for elite bargaining and access to state resources. Ogunleye (2026) noted that populist actors make use of political rhetoric to criticise existing elites and obtain the endorsement of the majority. Agbedejobi (2025), in his discussion of populist speech and electioneering in Nigeria, similarly shows how anti-establishment rhetoric constructs a distinction between establishment politicians and a fictive multitude represented as “the people.” The people consequently become an important political currency through which candidates present themselves as alternatives to an established political order. Populist communication is therefore not only about opposition to elites; it is also about creating a political identity through which the candidate claims to speak directly for ordinary citizens.

This relationship between representation and electoral promises is significant because political promises provide one of the principal ways through which candidates attempt to demonstrate that they understand the grievances of citizens. In an environment where citizens are dissatisfied with political institutions, promises of change, reform, development and a better political order can become powerful instruments of mobilisation. The promise does not operate only as a statement of future policy; it also allows a candidate to construct an image of responsiveness and political difference. The importance of this relationship is reflected in the Nigerian experience discussed by Ogunleye (2026), where political actors have used populist rhetoric to criticise existing governments, appeal to popular sentiment and present themselves as representatives of ordinary Nigerians.

The difficulty, however, emerges after electoral victory such that the same political promise that helped to establish a connection between the candidate and the electorate becomes a basis upon which government performance can be assessed. Ogunleye (2026) links populist governance in Nigeria to a gap between promises and performance, arguing that political actors may criticise the practices of existing elites before assuming office but reproduce similar patterns once in government. The problem is therefore cyclical: dissatisfaction with government creates an opportunity for populist mobilisation; populist actors respond with promises of change; electoral victory incorporates them into the governing establishment; failure to meet expectations produces renewed dissatisfaction. This cycle provides an important foundation for understanding why the politics of promises remains significant in Nigerian elections. The problem of unfulfilled promises must therefore be located within this wider crisis of representation. Where political parties are weak and political competition is highly personalised, promises may become strongly associated with individual candidates rather than durable party programmes.

Electoral Promises, Unfulfilled Manifestos and the Crisis of Accountability

Electoral manifestos and political promises occupy an important place in representative democracy because they communicate what candidates and parties intend to do when entrusted with political authority. In principle, they allow citizens to evaluate competing programmes and provide a basis for judging government performance after elections. However, the Nigerian experience raises questions about the extent to which these commitments function as effective instruments of accountability. The literature supplied for this study points repeatedly to a persistent distance between what political actors promise during election campaigns and what governments subsequently deliver.

Ogunleye (2026) places this promise–performance gap at the centre of the discussion of populism and democratic backsliding in Nigeria. The political value of a promise is particularly strong during an election because it enables a candidate to respond to public frustration and create expectations of political change. Once the election is over, however, the same promise becomes a reference point for accountability. Where governments fail to meet those expectations, citizens may interpret the failure not simply as an unsuccessful policy outcome but as another indication of the weakness of political representation. The unfulfilled manifesto consequently becomes part of the broader cycle through which distrust in democratic institutions is reproduced.

The Nigerian electoral experience illustrates this problem through the recurring use of anti-establishment messages. Ogunleye (2026) discusses the 2015 general election and the use of populist rhetoric by the APC presidential candidate Muhammadu Buhari to criticise the existing government and promise to restructure government. The subsequent gap between promises and performance contributed to disappointment and declining confidence. By 2023, the political environment again provided fertile ground for appeals directed against the political establishment, including the mobilisation surrounding the Obi movement. The significance

of these developments is not simply that different candidates made different promises. Rather, they demonstrate the continuing political usefulness of dissatisfaction with previous governments and the capacity of electoral promises to reactivate expectations of political transformation.

Madueke's (2026) analysis of political parties strengthens this argument by locating the weakness of accountability within the structure of the political system itself. Where parties are weakly institutionalised, ideologically incoherent and dominated by elite networks, manifesto commitments may lack the institutional strength necessary to survive changes in political leadership or internal party bargaining. The result is a political environment in which electoral competition can be intense while programmatic accountability remains weak. The electorate may therefore repeatedly encounter political promises without developing effective institutional mechanisms for holding political actors to those promises.

Artificial Intelligence and the Transformation of Political Communication

The development of artificial intelligence introduces a further change in the political communication environment because AI systems can produce text, images, audio and video with increasingly limited technical knowledge and financial resources. Łabuz and Nehring (2024) argue that the increasing quality and democratisation of deepfake technology have lowered the barriers to producing manipulated audiovisual content. Generative AI consequently expands the resources available to political and non-political actors by reducing the time, cost and technical requirements associated with producing synthetic political communication. Their argument is particularly relevant to elections because political communication is highly dependent on public attention and timing. Content released shortly before an election may circulate rapidly before citizens, journalists and fact-checkers have sufficient time to assess its authenticity. Their analysis of elections in 2023 demonstrates that deepfakes were already being used in different political contexts to promote candidates, discredit opponents, create political satire and undermine trust in political information. Importantly, however, the authors do not conclude that deepfakes had already become a decisive force determining electoral outcomes. Instead, they describe the emerging condition as "information pollution."

The idea of information pollution is useful for understanding the changing political communication environment without falling into technological determinism. Łabuz and Nehring (2024) reject exaggerated claims of an inevitable "information apocalypse" and emphasise the need to distinguish between the existence of a technological threat and its actual political consequences. Their position is particularly relevant to the Nigerian context because the introduction of AI into electoral communication does not automatically mean that AI will determine electoral outcomes. Rather, its importance lies in the new opportunities it creates for producing and circulating political content within an already contested information environment.

Okafor (2026) develops this concern in the Nigerian context by arguing that the country's 2027 elections will take place within an information environment in which sophisticated synthetic political manipulation is increasingly accessible. His analysis links AI-generated political content to institutional weakness, limited media literacy and the historical normalisation of electoral manipulation. This is significant because technological manipulation does not operate in isolation. The effectiveness of synthetic content can be strengthened by pre-existing distrust and political polarisation. Where citizens already suspect political opponents, institutions or media organisations, synthetic content may reinforce existing beliefs rather than create entirely new ones.

Okpaka (2026) extends this discussion by drawing attention to the multi-ethnic and multilingual character of Nigeria's digital space. Generative AI can produce synthetic audio, video and text in Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo and Nigerian Pidgin, creating possibilities for political communication that is linguistically and regionally specific. The significance of this development goes beyond the technical ability to reproduce speech. It creates the possibility of addressing different communities in forms that appear culturally and linguistically familiar. In a political environment where ethnic and regional identities already influence electoral competition, the capacity to produce such content can increase the specificity of political communication. The linguistic dimension is especially important because political communication in Nigeria increasingly takes place through social media and messaging platforms, including WhatsApp voice notes. Okpaka (2026) shows how AI-mediated electoral manipulation can exploit this environment through content that appears to come from political candidates, community figures or other trusted actors. The combination of low production costs, rapid circulation and

linguistic specificity creates a communication environment in which synthetic political messages can reach particular audiences with considerable speed.

The literature therefore indicates that the transformation produced by generative AI is not limited to deepfakes. Deepfake technology provides a particularly visible example of synthetic media, but the broader development of generative AI involves the capacity to create and modify political language itself. Brautović et al. (2026) are particularly important here because their concept of algorithmic populism captures the movement from amplification towards production, adaptation and amplification. When this argument is placed alongside Okpaka's (2026) discussion of linguistic and regional targeting, AI appears capable of supporting political communication that is not only synthetic but also context-adjusted.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Framing Theory

Framing Theory was developed by Erving Goffman in 1974 in his book *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. The theory explains how information can be presented or organised in particular ways so that people understand an issue from a particular perspective. In political communication, framing is important because political actors do not simply give citizens information; they select certain issues, emphasise particular problems and present events in ways that can influence how audiences interpret them. Entman (1993) later developed one of the most widely used explanations of framing, arguing that framing involves selecting aspects of reality and making them more noticeable in communication. Frames can therefore influence what people see as a problem, who they consider responsible, what solutions they support and how they evaluate political actors. This makes Framing Theory useful for studying populism because populist politicians frequently frame politics around a simple division between "the people" and "the elite", while presenting themselves as the solution to problems facing ordinary citizens (Mudde, 2004).

Framing Theory is particularly suitable for this study because AI can increase the ability of political actors to create and distribute carefully framed political messages. In the context of Nigeria's 2027 elections, AI could be used to analyse voter interests and generate different versions of political messages for different audiences. A politician could frame unemployment as the failure of previous governments when addressing young voters, frame educational costs as evidence of elite neglect when addressing students, or frame insecurity as the result of government failure when addressing affected communities. The same political actor could therefore communicate different versions of a broader political promise while maintaining a common populist message. AI-generated images, videos, text, voice and personalised messages could make these frames more attractive, emotional and easier to circulate through digital platforms. The theory helps this study examine not simply whether AI is used, but how AI may shape the presentation of political promises and political problems in ways that influence voter interpretation and mobilisation.

Applied to the central argument of this paper, Framing Theory provides a link between unfulfilled manifestos, populist politics and machine-generated promises. Previous political promises may become framed as evidence that existing political elites have failed ordinary citizens, creating an opportunity for politicians to present themselves as the alternative. AI may then provide new tools for constructing and distributing these frames more rapidly and personally. The concept of machine-generated promises can therefore be understood as part of a broader framing process in which AI-assisted communication helps political actors select issues, emphasise particular grievances and present promises in ways designed to resonate with specific groups of voters. The theory consequently allows the study to examine whether AI could transform the traditional political promise from a relatively fixed manifesto commitment into a personalised and continuously adaptable populist message, and what this may mean for voter perception, political trust, mobilisation, misinformation and democratic accountability in Nigeria's 2027 elections.

METHODS

The study adopted a qualitative content analysis to examine Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a tool of populist politics in Nigeria's 2027 elections. The method was considered appropriate because the study focuses on

interpreting how AI may transform the production, adaptation, and circulation of electoral promises and the implications of these developments for political accountability, governance, and democracy. Rather than statistically measuring voter behaviour, the study examined documented political communication, scholarly literature, institutional materials, and verified examples of AI-generated electoral content. The study relied entirely on secondary data drawn from four categories of sources: peer-reviewed journal articles and scholarly books; government and electoral documents; institutional and policy reports; and credible media and fact-checking reports. Materials published between 2019 and September 2026 were prioritised to capture developments surrounding Nigeria’s 2023 elections and the emerging AI environment preceding the 2027 elections. Earlier foundational works were retained where necessary to explain key concepts and theoretical arguments.

A structured selection procedure was applied to improve the transparency of the analysis. Materials were included where they directly addressed at least one of the following: AI and political communication; populism and electoral politics in Nigeria; electoral promises and political accountability; algorithmic communication and micro-targeting; deepfakes and political misinformation; or documented AI-generated political content. For digital political artifacts, materials were included only where they had been publicly documented by credible media organisations, fact-checking organisations, institutional sources, or scholarly publications and where sufficient information was available to establish their political relevance. Unverifiable, duplicated, and unrelated materials were excluded. Particular attention was given to documented examples of AI-mediated political communication associated with Nigeria’s electoral environment, including the 2023 AI-generated audio attributed to political actors and the September 2026 AI-generated newspaper-style claims attributed to Atiku Abubakar. These materials were treated as illustrative cases of machine-generated political communication rather than evidence that the named candidates personally produced the content. Their relevance lies in demonstrating how AI can generate, modify, and falsely attribute political statements and electoral promises.

The selected materials were organised according to source type, publication period, political issue, form of AI-mediated communication, target audience where identifiable, populist framing, type of political claim, verification status and implications for accountability and democracy. The analysis employed thematic coding based on the study’s research questions and conceptual framework. Initial codes included unfulfilled electoral promises, political grievances, anti-elite framing, AI-generated content, audience targeting, linguistic and regional adaptation, production, adaptation, amplification, political engagement, authenticity, accountability and democratic implications. These codes were subsequently grouped into broader themes corresponding to the two research questions. The study acknowledges that its reliance on secondary qualitative evidence limits its ability to establish the actual causal effect of AI-generated promises on individual voting behaviour. The findings therefore concern documented communication practices and emerging political mechanisms rather than statistically generalisable voter effects.

Analytical Matrix of AI-Generated Political Content

To provide a structured basis for the qualitative analysis, the study categorised the documented AI-mediated political materials according to their form, illustrative content and analytical focus. The matrix enabled the study to examine how different forms of AI-generated content may contribute to the production, adaptation, circulation and interpretation of populist electoral promises.

Type of AI content	Example examined	Analytical focus
AI-generated audio	Fabricated political audio attributed to political actors	Attribution, authenticity and political framing
AI-generated images	AI-generated political images and campaign materials	Visual persuasion and emotional appeal
AI-generated text	Machine-generated political promises and claims	Promise content, populist framing and audience appeal
AI-generated newspaper-style content	Fabricated newspaper-style electoral claims	Credibility, misinformation and political accountability
AI-generated video	Synthetic political videos and manipulated audiovisual materials	Personalisation, persuasion and potential voter perception

The matrix was not used to measure the frequency or statistical effect of the different content types. Rather, it provided an analytical structure for identifying the distinctive ways through which AI-mediated political communication can influence the presentation of political actors, grievances, promises and proposed solutions. The identified materials were subsequently interpreted through the study's thematic codes and Framing Theory. The analysis organised the documented AI-mediated political materials into distinct forms, including synthetic audio, machine-generated text, newspaper-style political content and other visual or audiovisual materials. Examining these forms together shows that AI is transforming political communication not only through the circulation of existing messages but also through the production, adaptation and presentation of political claims in forms that can appear increasingly authentic and audience-specific.

DISCUSSION

How Artificial Intelligence Transformed the Production of Populist Electoral Promises in Nigeria

The findings of this study indicated that Artificial Intelligence is transforming the production of populist electoral promises in Nigeria by moving political communication beyond the conventional process in which identifiable candidates and political parties formulate promises through manifestos, speeches, rallies, interviews and advertisements. Traditionally, the candidate or party remained the recognisable author of an electoral commitment, making it possible for citizens to compare promises with subsequent governmental performance. However, digital media weakened this arrangement by enabling politicians, supporters and citizens to communicate directly without relying exclusively on conventional media gatekeepers. AI takes the transformation further because political content can now be produced, modified, personalised, visualised and circulated through technological systems. The important change, therefore, is not merely the speed of communication but the changing architecture of political message production.

Nigerian political parties have often been characterised by weak institutionalisation, ideological incoherence, personalistic leadership and ethnoregional or clientelistic networks, conditions that weaken their capacity to consistently aggregate citizens' interests (Madueke, 2026; Ogunleye, 2026). In such an environment, populist politics becomes attractive because it enables political actors to construct a direct relationship between the supposedly neglected "people" and allegedly self-serving political elite. Electoral promises consequently become instruments through which grievances concerning unemployment, insecurity, poverty and the cost of living are translated into expectations of immediate political transformation. Populist speech in Nigeria similarly relies on the symbolic construction of "the people" as a political category whose interests are presented as being ignored by established elites (Agbedejobi, 2025; Ogunleye, 2026).

The emergence of social media altered the circulation of these promises, while algorithmic communication altered their visibility. Political actors could bypass traditional media and communicate directly with specific audiences, while platform algorithms increasingly influenced which messages received attention. The development of generative AI introduces a further transformation because the technology can participate in the production and adaptation of political content itself. Brautović et al. (2026) conceptualised this development as a movement from algorithmic populism based principally on amplification towards a broader system involving production, adaptation and amplification. Thus, whereas social media allowed an existing promise to travel further, generative AI can assist in creating the message before it is circulated.

The distinction becomes particularly important when examining Nigeria's 2023 presidential election. AI-generated audio was circulated purporting to involve Atiku Abubakar and other political actors discussing electoral manipulation. The recording was subsequently identified as fabricated, with investigations raising significant inconsistencies concerning its authenticity. The incident demonstrates that AI was already weakening the conventional connection between a political actor and a political statement before the widespread emergence of the current generative-AI environment. The significance is therefore deeper than misinformation: a candidate could be represented as saying something that he had never said. Similar developments were evident in the wider 2023 information environment, where campaigns and political supporters participated in producing, reinforcing and responding to false or misleading information through digital platforms (Ibrahim & Ekdale, 2026; Okafor, 2026).

The transformation becomes more analytically revealing when AI-generated content takes the form of an electoral promise rather than merely a false statement. This occurred in September 2026 when an AI-generated newspaper-style front page circulated online claiming that Atiku Abubakar had promised that "No Nigerian will pay house rent when I become President." Related fabricated materials attributed other attractive commitments to him, including free fuel, scholarships and healthcare. FactCheckAfrica established that the rent-free claim was fabricated, identifying inconsistencies in the newspaper's masthead, typography, date and layout, while Atiku's media team also denied the statement. Nigerian Democratic Report subsequently documented several similar AI-generated newspaper-style claims. The incident must not be interpreted as evidence that Atiku personally employed AI to formulate these promises. Rather, it demonstrates that AI can generate and attribute a politically attractive promise to a candidate without the candidate actually making it.

The fabricated rent-free claim addressed an immediate socioeconomic grievance—housing affordability—and presented an extremely simple solution. Its political appeal therefore reflected the basic grammar of populist communication: identify a widespread grievance, simplify the problem and associate an attractive solution with a political leader. Similar promises concerning fuel, scholarships and healthcare follow the same logic. Generative AI does not create these grievances or independently produce populism; instead, it provides an inexpensive technological mechanism through which such grievances can be converted into persuasive political content at greater speed and scale (Brautović et al., 2026; Okpaka, 2026; Okafor, 2026).

The linguistic and regional diversity of Nigeria makes this capacity particularly consequential. Okpaka (2026) argues that generative AI can produce synthetic audio, video and textual content in Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo and Nigerian Pidgin with relatively low technical barriers. This means that political messages can potentially be adapted to different social and linguistic constituencies. A promise concerning unemployment, for example, can be framed differently for graduates, artisans or rural communities, while concerns about insecurity can be expressed according to the experiences of particular regions. The significance of AI consequently lies not simply in producing more political messages but in making increasingly audience-specific messages economically feasible. This strengthens the capacity of populist communication to appear locally relevant while maintaining a broader national political narrative.

The findings therefore support a conceptualisation of machine-generated promises around three interconnected capacities. First is production, through which AI assists in creating political claims that did not previously exist in textual, visual, audio or video form. Second is adaptation, through which existing political messages can be modified according to audience, language, platform or context. Third is amplification, through which generated content is distributed through social-media networks and algorithmic systems. This represents an important extension of the earlier digital-populist environment, in which political actors primarily sought to make existing messages more visible (Brautović et al., 2026; Okpaka, 2026).

This development should nevertheless not be interpreted as evidence that AI will inevitably determine the 2027 elections. Existing scholarship cautions that AI technologies operate within pre-existing political, institutional and social conditions rather than independently creating populism, polarisation or electoral manipulation (Brautović et al., 2026; Łabuz & Nehring, 2024; Okafor, 2026). Nigeria's vulnerability therefore derives from the interaction between technological capacity and existing conditions of political distrust, weak institutions, misinformation and intense electoral competition. AI is better understood as an enabling infrastructure that can intensify existing political practices.

The central finding is consequently that Artificial Intelligence has altered who can produce political promises, how rapidly they can be produced, how they can be adapted to particular audiences, what forms they can assume and how easily their authenticity can be contested. The September 2026 Atiku rent-free episode illustrates this emerging reality particularly clearly, while the 2023 deepfake-audio incident demonstrates that the process has deeper roots in Nigeria's evolving digital political environment. The movement is therefore not from conventional manifestos to their complete replacement by machines. Rather, it is from human-authored and institutionally identifiable promises towards an increasingly decentralised and technologically mediated promise environment. This brings the argument of the study back to its central trajectory: from unfulfilled manifestos to machine-generated promises. Nigeria's traditional problem has been whether political actors fulfil commitments made to voters. The emerging problem is whether voters can first determine which commitments were genuinely

made, by whom, to which audiences and with what political or policy implications. Artificial Intelligence has consequently introduced a new layer into populist electoral politics—one in which the production of political promises itself has become technologically scalable, adaptable and increasingly difficult to authenticate.

The Implications of AI-Generated Promises for Political Accountability, Governance and Democracy in Nigeria's 2027 Elections

The emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in electoral communication introduces a new dimension to Nigeria's longstanding problem of political accountability. Electoral promises traditionally establish a relationship between citizens and political office holders by providing a basis for evaluating electoral intentions and subsequent governmental performance. Once articulated through manifestos, campaign speeches, rallies or interviews, such promises become reference points against which elected governments can be judged (Towoju & Lambe, 2025). However, Nigeria has repeatedly experienced a gap between electoral commitments and policy outcomes because of fiscal constraints, administrative weaknesses and inadequate accountability mechanisms (Towoju & Lambe, 2025; Madueke, 2026). AI-generated promises complicate this relationship because citizens may encounter political commitments whose authenticity is uncertain even before questions of implementation arise.

The central change is therefore an authenticity gap alongside the traditional delivery gap. Under conventional electoral politics, a candidate makes a promise and can subsequently be held responsible for that identifiable commitment. AI-mediated communication can disrupt this sequence because a promise may be generated by an unknown actor and attributed to a candidate who never made it. Accountability consequently shifts from the question of *why a promise was not fulfilled* to the more fundamental question of *whether the candidate ever made the promise*. This creates an evidentiary problem because accountability requires citizens to establish the existence, content and authorship of political commitments before evaluating their performance.

The September 2026 controversy surrounding AI-generated newspaper front pages attributed to Atiku Abubakar illustrates this problem. Among the fabricated claims circulated online was an alleged promise to provide free treatment for Nigerians suffering from kidney-related conditions, alongside another purported commitment that no Nigerian would pay house rent if he became president. Fact-checkers established that the newspaper-style materials were fabricated, while the candidate's media team denied the claims. The kidney-treatment claim is particularly significant because it emerged amid wider public discussion about Nigerians reportedly selling their kidneys in response to severe economic hardship. The fabricated promise could therefore attract attention because it connected a presidential candidate to a genuine and emotionally powerful public grievance, even though the political commitment itself was not authentic.

This example demonstrates the implications of AI-generated promises for political engagement. Citizens encountering such content may share it, comment on it, express support or criticism, compare it with other candidates' positions, or demand clarification. Consequently, political engagement can occur around a promise that has no authentic political author. A politically salient issue does not necessarily have to originate from a candidate's manifesto before it can be transformed into an apparently direct electoral commitment. AI can facilitate the rapid conversion of existing grievances into accessible political claims, thereby changing citizens from merely consuming campaign messages to participating in an information environment in which political claims are generated, modified and contested by multiple actors.

This dynamic is particularly relevant to populist politics. Populist communication commonly translates complex socioeconomic grievances into simple claims presented as solutions for "the people" (Agbedejobi, 2025; Ogunleye, 2026). Generative AI can strengthen this process by enabling messages to be produced rapidly and adapted to particular grievances and audiences. Concerns about housing, healthcare, unemployment, education or the cost of living can be converted into specific and emotionally attractive promises. AI does not create the underlying grievances; rather, it provides a mechanism through which existing grievances can be transformed into personalised political narratives at greater speed and scale (Brautović et al., 2026; Okpaka, 2026).

The consequences for accountability are therefore substantial. Where synthetic material is mistaken for an authentic campaign commitment, citizens may develop expectations around policies that were never part of a

candidate's programme. Candidates may also be compelled to defend or deny commitments they never made, while genuine promises compete for attention against synthetic claims. The conventional promise–performance relationship consequently becomes more difficult to establish. AI introduces the possibility that citizens may be politically engaged and develop expectations without having a reliable basis for identifying who actually made the promise.

AI-generated promises can also affect governance by complicating the relationship between electoral mandates and public expectations. Democratic governance ideally translates commitments evaluated during elections into policy implementation. If synthetic promises become widely circulated and accepted, governments may face pressure over policies that were never formally promised. Conversely, politicians may use the prevalence of AI-generated content to dismiss genuine statements as fabricated. AI can therefore blur the boundary between electoral mandate, citizen expectation and governmental responsibility. This problem becomes more significant in Nigeria, where weak party institutionalisation and personalised political competition already undermine the translation of electoral commitments into coherent policy programmes (Madueke, 2026).

The implications for democracy extend beyond individual fabricated claims. Elections require voters to make informed judgments among competing political alternatives, and such judgments depend upon a reasonably reliable information environment. Okafor (2026) conceptualises this challenge through epistemic security, arguing that synthetic political content can undermine citizens' ability to establish reliable beliefs about politically relevant facts. The danger is intensified by the "liar's dividend," whereby political actors can dismiss genuine evidence as AI-generated because synthetic content has become common (Chesney & Citron, 2019; Okafor, 2026). Persistent exposure to fabricated political material may consequently generate uncertainty and political cynicism, particularly within Nigeria's already fragmented and distrustful information environment (Okafor, 2026; Okpaka, 2026).

Nevertheless, AI can also strengthen democratic accountability when applied to authentic political commitments. Elemo, Alhazam and Saanu (2026) discuss *ÀDÉHÙN*, an AI-powered civic technology platform designed to assess electoral promises according to criteria such as clarity, feasibility, inclusivity, coverage and policy alignment. Such applications demonstrate that AI can help citizens analyse manifestos, compare commitments and monitor governmental performance. The same technology capable of producing synthetic political claims can therefore also strengthen citizens' capacity to verify and evaluate genuine ones.

For Nigeria's 2027 elections, the challenge is consequently institutional as much as technological. Candidates and parties will need authoritative channels through which citizens can verify manifestos and campaign positions, while electoral institutions such as INEC require stronger digital information-integrity capacity and rapid clarification mechanisms (Okafor, 2026). AI should not, however, be treated as an autonomous force that will determine electoral outcomes. Its significance lies in its interaction with existing grievances, weak institutions, populist communication and digital misinformation (Brautović et al., 2026; Łabuz & Nehring, 2024). The central implication is that Nigeria's accountability problem is evolving from a single delivery gap into a dual problem of delivery and authenticity. Democracy must now confront not only whether elected leaders fulfil genuine promises, but also whether citizens can establish which promises were genuinely made, by whom and to which audiences. The movement from unfulfilled manifestos to machine-generated promises therefore represents a new stage in the politics of electoral accountability, political engagement and democratic governance in Nigeria's 2027 elections.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the transition from unfulfilled electoral manifestos to machine-generated promises and the emerging role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a tool of populist politics in Nigeria's 2027 elections. The study establishes that Nigeria's longstanding challenge of unfulfilled electoral promises is increasingly intersecting with a changing digital communication environment in which AI can facilitate the rapid production, adaptation, personalisation and circulation of political messages. While conventional electoral politics creates a delivery gap between promises and governmental performance, AI introduces an additional authenticity gap concerning whether a political promise was genuinely made and who should be held responsible for it. The analysis further showed that AI-generated promises can stimulate political engagement by connecting genuine public grievances

with apparently attractive political commitments, while simultaneously weakening the informational foundations of accountability and democratic choice. Nevertheless, AI can also strengthen democratic governance through manifesto analysis, promise tracking and civic technology. The study therefore concludes that AI should neither be treated as an inevitable threat nor ignored as a passing technological development. Nigeria's 2027 elections require stronger institutional capacity, digital information integrity, civic media literacy and transparent political communication to ensure that emerging AI technologies enhance rather than undermine electoral accountability, governance and democratic development.

REFERENCES

1. Agbedejobi, P. (2025). Populist speech and electioneering in Nigeria: Elements of populist communicative performance. *Asian Journal of Media Studies*, 45, 24–41.
2. Agency Report. (2026, August 3). AI-driven disinformation major threat to 2027 general election – INEC chair. *Premium Times*
3. Biały, F., & Gibson, R. (2025). The first TikTok election? Social media, generative AI, and data-driven campaigning in the 2024 UK General Election. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 78(Supplement_1), 205–219.
4. Bisong, J. Y., Akume, M. D., Oluwatoyin, A. M., & Hussein, A. (2025). Artificial intelligence and elections in Nigeria: Opportunities and challenges. *The Polis: Journal of Political Studies*, 2(1).
5. Brautović, M., Roško, M., Grkeš Tošović, I., & John, R. (2026). Generative AI and the transformation of algorithmic populism: From amplification to content creation. *Croatian Political Science Review*, 63(2), 159–182.
6. Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 43(4), 51–58.
7. FactCheckAfrica. (2026, September 2026). Did Atiku say no Nigerian will pay house rent when he becomes president?
8. Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. Harvard University Press.
9. Heinisch, R., & Werner, A. (2023). How rational are voters when expecting government parties to fulfil pledges? A cross-national survey experiment. *European Journal of Political Research*, 62(3), 852–872.
10. Ibrahim, A. A., & Ekdale, B. (2026). Political campaign responses to information disorder: A case study of the 2023 Nigerian presidential elections. *International Journal of Press/Politics*, 31(3) 76-89.
11. İşeri, E., Ahmad, M. A., Mete, E. S., & Ersoy, M. (2025). Populist and anti-populist discourses in Nigerian and Turkish presidential elections: Populist zeitgeist debate revisited. *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 50(2), 403–419.
12. Jungherr, A., Rauchfleisch, A., & Wuttke, A. (2026). Artificial intelligence in election campaigns: Perceptions, penalties, and implications. *Political Communication*, 43(4), 585–606.
13. Łabuz, M., & Nehring, C. (2024). On the way to deep fake democracy? Deep fakes in election campaigns in 2023. *European Political Science*, 23, 454–473.
14. Madueke, O. (2026) Weak parties, strong elites: political institutionalisation and democratic fragility in Nigeria, *African Identities*, DOI: 10.1080/14725843.2026.2657558
15. Mudde, C. (2004). The populist zeitgeist. *Government and Opposition*, 39(4), 541–563.
16. Mudde, C., & Rovira Kaltwasser, C. (2017). *Populism: A very short introduction*. Oxford University Press.
17. Nigerian Democratic Report. (2026, September 3). Fact-check: How AI is being used to create fake newspaper front pages and misinform voters about 2027 electoral promises.
18. Ogunleye, M. S. (2026). Populism and Democratic Backsliding in Nigeria: Lessons from Emerging Democracies. *Journal of Innovations*, 4(5), 68-82.
19. Okafor, C. I. (2026). Synthetic deception and democratic fragility: Artificial intelligence, deepfakes, and electoral security in Nigeria's 2027 general elections. *Journal of Education, Communication, and Digital Humanities*, 4(2), 464–474.
20. Okpaka, C. (2026). AI-mediated electoral manipulation and the fragility of democratic consent in Nigeria's multi-ethnic digital space. *International Journal of Recent Trends in Multidisciplinary Research*, 6(4), 385–395.

21. Omilusi, M. (2020). Campaign communication in Nigeria's 2019 general elections: Unfulfilled party pledges and voter engagement without a social contract. *Journal of African Elections*, 19(2), 97–124.
22. Rauchfleisch, A., Jungherr, A., & Wuttke, A. (2025). Explaining public preferences for regulating artificial intelligence in election campaigns: Evidence from the U.S. and Taiwan. *Telecommunications Policy*, 49(10), 10-30
23. Tajudeen, A. (2025). Artificial intelligence and election in Nigeria: An assessment of the possible impact on the country's electioneering process. *Kashere Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 3(2), 190–201.
24. Thomson, R. (2011). Citizens' evaluations of the fulfillment of election pledges: Evidence from Ireland. *The Journal of Politics*, 73(1), 187–201
25. Towoju, A., & Lambe, E. O. (2025). Electoral promises and democratic accountability: Strengthening government–citizen engagement for national unity in Nigeria. *International Journal of Advances in Social Sciences and Humanities*, 4(3), 121–131.
26. Yilmaz, I., Bliuc, A.-M., Norrie, R., Smith, C. M., Smith, J., Evans, C., Courtney, D. S., & Barnett, D. (2026). Populism in the age of social media: A systematic review of recent digital populism research. *New Media & Society*.