The Impacts of Artificial Intelligence on National Security

: AI and the spread of misinformation

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Abstract

This study examines the ways generative AI is linked to the large-scale creation of misinformation and to the weakening of public confidence in common information channels. A central point is that established fact-checking practices are struggling to keep up, especially as AI-produced material changes quickly in form and volume. The report considers the ways generative AI tools can feed into the creation and spread of misleading material. As that kind of content becomes easier to produce, confidence in established information sources weakens, and the usual approaches to fact-checking are put under strain. Drawing on a broad dataset covering 47 countries, the study points to a link between levels of education, familiarity with AI, and how likely people are to accept misinformation.

Introduction

Generative AI has risen fast and, in the process, it has changed how information gets made and spread, to the point where mass-produced synthetic material is no longer a rare event but an ongoing condition. With large language models (LLMs) and deepfake tools steadily erasing the boundary between genuine discussion and deliberate invention, a widening trust problem is taking shape, one that can weaken democratic life. Once machine-written stories read like human writing, the usual knowledge gatekeepers lose their grip, and fact-checking systems that were built for slower, smaller flows of claims get swamped. This investigation looks at the ways automated propaganda and highly realistic media take advantage of common cognitive habits, so that reading and watching becomes less about learning and more about constant doubt. Framing the issue as only a technical problem misses what is at stake socially and politically. If people cannot settle on a shared version of reality, manipulation becomes easier to carry out and harder to resist. With 87% of people worldwide calling for tougher laws against AI-driven

misinformation, and with confidence in online content already being weakened by this pattern, the central question to analyze is: **What makes AI succeed when it comes to misinformation?**

Key Findings

Recent studies point to urgent and widespread disruption linked to AI-driven misinformation. Strong calls for oversight keep coming up. The dataset to be examined draws on responses from 47 countries worldwide, with an even split between male and female participants. Across this sample, 87% support rules that restrict AI-generated fake content. At the same time, confidence in the public information space appears to have weakened. About 70% of reports doubt whether online information contains any truth at all. AI adoption is also moving fast while regulation stays behind. In 17 countries, the share of groups using AI rose from 34% in 2022 to 71% in 2024. Countries with expanding economies stand out, with 80% of people there saying they rely on these tools often, while developed countries report lower reliance at 58%. Viral content still travels faster than verification. One deep-fake video can collect views and be shared 300,000 times in a single day, and fact-checkers often arrive later, after the damage is already in place. School-related outcomes raise another concern. Between 27% and 36% of students say dependence on AI has dulled their analytical thinking, which suggests some young people might struggle to judge claims on their own. This risk is no longer theoretical, it has become a present problem that calls for layered, well-planned solutions.

The Nature of Truth in the AI Era

Currently, even the basic idea of “truth” feels unstable when the information is online. Language models can sound polished and persuasive, but their design is not really centered on being true. What they are built to do is guess the next word and keep the text moving, so the result often reads smoothly while staying detached from whether the details are correct. Because there is no real obligation to the facts, the writing can look confident and expert, yet still be wrong. In some settings, people treat this kind of output as close to nonsense. That reaction makes sense if the system is not checking evidence in any serious way. Still, many readers are drawn in by surface signals: a tidy interface, formal tone, and citations scattered through the page. AI-driven presentations can take advantage of this habit, offering the look of knowledge while skipping the investigation, the back-and-forth reasoning, and the persuasive work that real knowledge usually depends on. As a result, separating actual understanding from a convincing performance is getting harder. It is also a mistake to treat these tools as reliable archives or as machines that can decide the correct answer. More accurately, they tend to mirror what is already common or widely repeated. Keeping information trustworthy therefore depends on stronger skepticism now, along with the ability to judge the output independently by using personal critical thinking and basic verification. Techniques of Automated Disinformation Misinformation has become a growing business, and generative AI is a major reason. In the past, spreading false stories took time and effort. It moved slowly and needed real people to keep it going. Now, machines can produce believable text in minutes, and it often costs almost nothing. So why does AI work so well for deception? One reason is that large language models absorb whatever material they are trained on. Cybercriminals and malware groups can fill the internet with fake articles and fake websites. If those sources get pulled into training data, the model can absorb them as if they were normal information. Later, when a chatbot is asked about a topic, those made-up claims can

come back, wrapped in a confident style that resembles a dependable answer. Bots also push misinformation using automated behavior online. They can flood platforms and inflate posts with likes and shares until a message looks popular. People often follow what appears to be widely supported. Repeat a false claim enough times and it starts to feel familiar, and familiarity can slide into belief. Another method is synthetic media. AI can generate realistic deep-fake images, audio, and video that put public figures into events that never happened. Leaders appear in places they never visited, saying things they never said. When the fake looks "real enough," some viewers stop asking for proof, because the appearance itself starts to function like evidence.

The Rise of Synthetic Media

In 2020, a deepfake video featuring a political figure passed a million views within a single day. It moved across people's screens faster than platforms could remove it, and even after it was shown to be fake, the effects on public belief stayed in place weeks later. Videos like this do not just exist as online jokes, they can be used to interfere with elections, pressure everyday people, and promote fake health "advice" to audiences who do not realize they are being misled. Detection methods now mostly depend on advanced software. These systems scan for unusual language cues, visual artifacts, and metadata that does not line up. Still, they tend to break down when they face new techniques they were not trained in, or when the same content appears across different languages and contexts. Survey results point to a tense situation. About 82% of respondents say they are concerned about machine-made falsehoods, and 87% say they want regulations to limit it. At the same time, cheaper and easier generative tools, including text-to-speech systems, have made deep-fake production more like an everyday product, which lets cybercriminals run large disinformation campaigns at low cost. The phrase "liar's dividend" has also become a useful excuse for dismissing real, trustworthy information by claiming it is

fabricated. Current frameworks try to define AI-driven misinformation, describe how it is produced, and outline possible responses based on who is involved. However, these frameworks keep shifting, since synthetic media keeps changing and forcing constant updates.

The Erosion of Shared Reality

Artificial intelligence tools have expanded quickly across the world. In a survey covering 47 countries, about 87% of respondents said they support laws meant to control it, and 70% also want tougher rules aimed at misinformation. Even so, public opinion is not confident. A majority, 54%, view AI with clear doubt, and overall trust has decreased over time, dropping from 63% in 2022 to 56% in 2024. This decline suggests growing concerns about safety, accuracy, and ethical problems, which then shape how people judge online content, news outlets, and even election outcomes. Skepticism shows up strongly when people think about information created by AI. Nearly 70% believe AI-generated information cannot be trusted. Deepfakes and the constant spread of misinformation make this worse, since they make it harder to tell what is real versus what is fake in everyday news. A weak understanding of how AI works adds to the problem. Only 39% report receiving any formal education about AI, yet 48% say they understand how the technology operates. Without that foundation, spotting artificial or manipulated material becomes uncertain. Workplace guidance is also limited, because only 40% of employees report that their employers provide clear instructions for dealing with AI.

Threats to Democratic Elections

Generative AI is increasingly influencing political discussion, and it has raised serious worries about false information that can interfere with fair elections. A survey of 48,340 adults across 47

countries reports that 70% find it difficult to tell whether online content comes from real sources or has been produced by AI. Along the same lines, 64% are concerned that elections could be influenced by AI bots or deepfakes. Support for tougher controls is also very high, with close to 90% calling for stricter regulations to limit AI-driven misinformation. In general, 87% argue that new laws are needed to deal with the problem, which points to a broad sense that existing rules are not doing enough. This data also shows general agreement that the current system for regulating AI use is insufficient. Trust in AI has weakened, with perceived trustworthiness declining from 63% in 2022 to 56% in 2024. At the same time, concern about AI's consequences has climbed from 49% to 62%, which suggests growing unease rather than reassurance. Confidence in governments using AI is also lower than expected, only 58% report moderate to high confidence, while 40% report low confidence. Another factor increasing the likelihood of unverified political messages being spread is limited AI education, since only 39% of people report having any formal education in AI. Putting together, these conditions leave voters more exposed to misinformation.

Global Public Trust and Attitudes

A New York Times report describes how the Trump administration is approaching foreign disinformation with the help of artificial intelligence (Myers, Wong, 2026). While trying to respond to AI-based deception, the administration first closed the Global Engagement Center and then sent a diplomatic cable to multiple U.S. embassies. Signed by Secretary of State Marco Rubio, the message pushed diplomats to use every available method against narratives described as hostile to the United States, including AI-supported tools such as X's Community Notes. What stands out in this shift is the speed and reach of AI. Compared with older forms of media, AI can spread harmful claims faster, and those claims can influence opinions inside the U.S. and in other

countries at the same time. Wilner's policy paper looks at the same issue by focusing on the connection between cyber operations and AI. He argues that AI can strengthen protection against false information, but it also supports offensive campaigns, especially when attackers target weak and unsecured internet-connected devices. Iran gives a clear example of how this can play out. After recent U.S. airstrikes in Iranian territory, Iran reportedly used AI to sharpen its propaganda against the United States. That case shows how fabricated media can be used to challenge U.S. actions and widen disagreements among allies. The article also points out another effect that matters for democracies: AI-driven disinformation damages public confidence in democratic institutions. It states that the United States is increasingly viewed as an unreliable source of information. In response, efforts are meant to bring back or strengthen outlets such as Voice of America and Radio Free Europe, since these services are presented as places where audiences can still find dependable reporting during a constant stream of inaccurate headlines and stories. When the New York Times article is read alongside Wilner's analysis, the pattern becomes clearer. AI makes misinformation easier and faster to produce, and as people trust institutions less, those institutions become easier targets for repeated disinformation attacks.

Data Survey on AI Misinformation

Artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping how people live and how information is encountered and exchanged. Since its inception, there have been growing concerns about the widespread production of misinformation generated by AI, which undermines public trust in our information sources. These scatterplots display data collected from 100 individuals in each of the 47 countries across six continents. The sample consisted of an even distribution of men and women who were surveyed on topics related to artificial intelligence, including awareness, usage, misinformation, manipulation, and the undermining of human rights.

Figure 1:

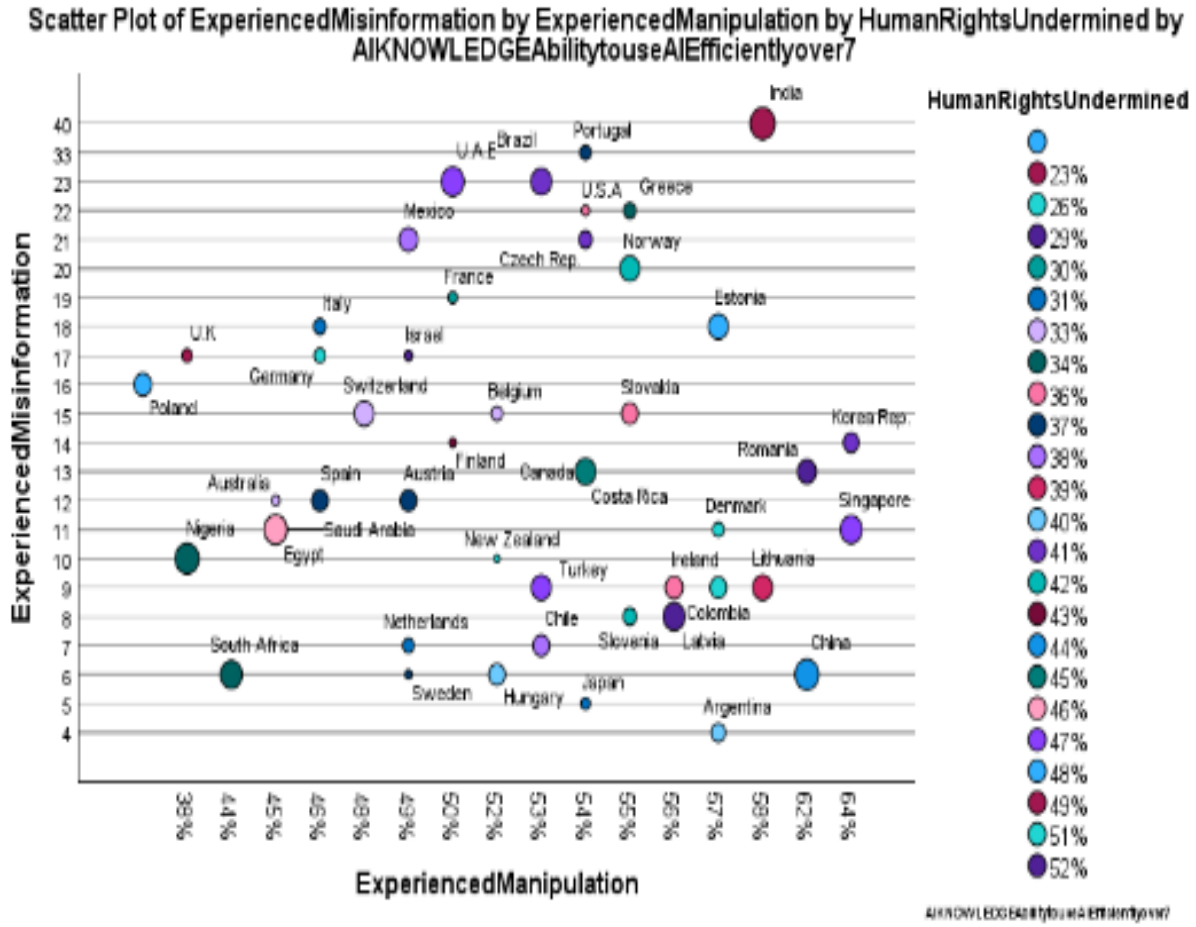

Figure 1:

: According to the data, the larger the bubble, the greater the country's knowledge of AI and its ability to use it efficiently. In a world where AI is dominant in some developed countries, its usage may not always serve the right purpose. A careful analysis of the chart reveals that countries like the U.S. and the U.K., do not use it efficiently for its intended purposes due to significant issues with misinformation and deepfakes.

Figure 2:

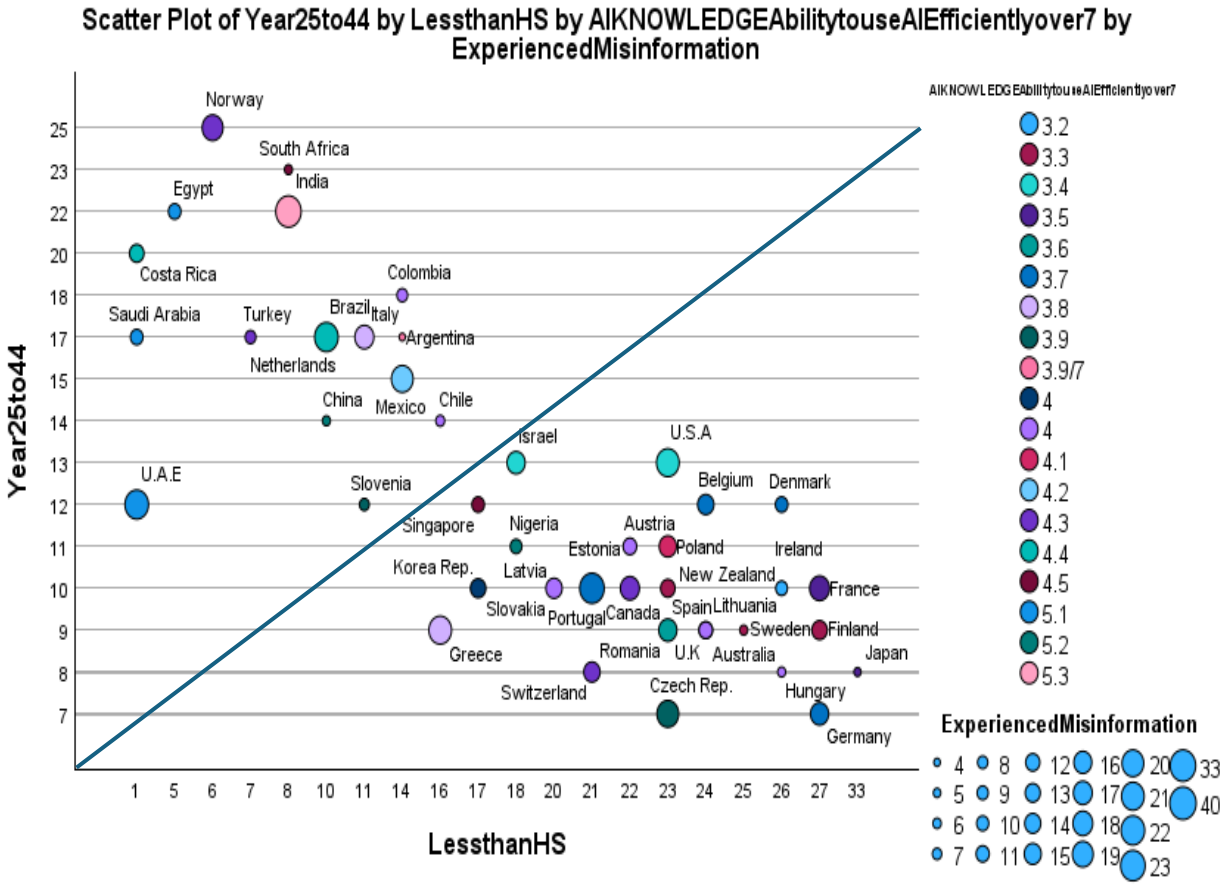

Figure 2: This chart indicates that countries with a higher percentage of the population lacking high school education generally experience more misinformation as seen below the linear line. This could stem from their inability to distinguish between genuine content and deepfakes, often due to a lack of awareness about the rapid advancements in modern technology and its applications.

Figure 3:

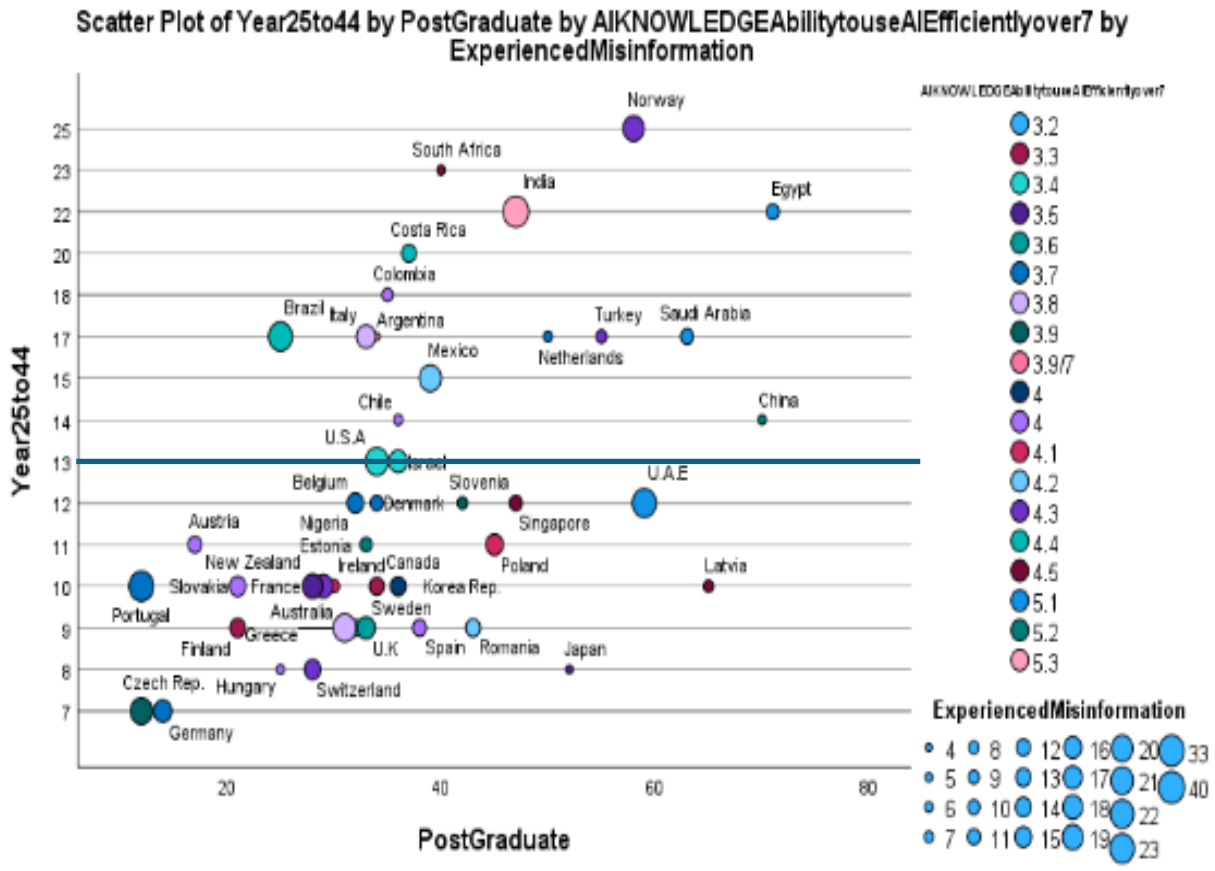

Figure 3: The chart illustrates the relationship between education, AI knowledge, and misinformation across various countries. Countries with higher education levels seem to have better knowledge of AI and experience less misinformation, while those with lower education levels may struggle with misinformation despite varying levels of AI knowledge.

Observation:

The analysis of the three charts highlights that the spread of misinformation is closely linked to educational attainment and AI knowledgeability. Higher education levels and better

understanding of AI tools correlate with reduced misinformation experiences, while populations with low education are more susceptible to false narratives.

Conclusion:

Artificial intelligence has become a threat to national security in a major way, and misinformation is one of the clearest representations that identifies it. What this points out is how fast generative AI is reshaping how people get information, and how that speed makes it easier for misleading posts, articles, and images to travel, while trust in everyday sources starts to wear down. Looking at the data, a practical gap becomes obvious: people need stronger education in media literacy and basic AI knowledge, so they can slow down, question what they see, and judge information instead of absorbing it automatically. Policy also cannot sit still. Lawmakers need to coordinate with technology companies and set rules that move at the same pace as AI-driven misinformation, rather than waiting until after harm has already happened. If schools, governments, online platforms, and regular users all act early and together, public discussion can stay more stable and citizens can stay better informed, even in the confusing and crowded digital environment. This is the main takeaway: misinformation is not only a technical problem. It is a shared responsibility, and dealing with it matters urgently. This is to protect the trust a population can have in the spread of information.

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