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Artificial Intelligence as a Tool of Soft Power: Legal and Ethical Dimensions

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Abstract:

The present contribution examines artificial intelligence as a central contemporary instrument of soft power in international politics, emphasizing its increasing capacity to shape global preferences through advanced digital technologies and algorithmic governance. It analyzes the legal frameworks regulating artificial intelligence with a specific emphasis on safeguarding core rights and civil liberties, alongside persistent ethical concerns relating to privacy, biases inherent in algorithmic systems, alongside transparency concerns in automated decision-making. Methodologically, the research relies on a descriptive–analytical framework rooted in the examination of national and international legal texts, relevant scholarly literature, and reports issued by international organizations, supplemented by comparative analysis where appropriate.

The findings demonstrate that artificial intelligence has emerged as a strategic soft power resource capable of exerting indirect influence on global public opinion and enhancing states' international image. Nevertheless, the study identifies significant legal and ethical deficiencies, bringing to light the requirement for a carefully articulated regulatory architecture capable of guiding accountable use, while safeguarding rights and freedoms.

*** Dr. Ali. Latreche** *** Dr. Karam Salam Abdel Raouf Salam**

Introduction

Over the course of the last twenty years, global developments have witnessed profound transformations driven by the digital revolution, most notably the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence technologies. These developments are no longer confined to technical or economic domains; rather, they have extended into the fields of media, politics, diplomacy, and the shaping of public opinion. This transformation has contributed to a fundamental reconfiguration of patterns of power and influence within the international system, as traditional forms of hard power—based on military and economic superiority—have become insufficient on their own to secure influence. Consequently, new instruments grounded in attraction and indirect influence has emerged, encapsulated in the concept of soft power.

Against this backdrop, artificial intelligence has progressively assumed a position among the most influential most influential tools for enhancing states' soft power capabilities. This is due to its advanced capacities in big data analytics, digital content targeting, the interpretation of human behavior, and the shaping of public preferences and orientations through social media platforms and digital media channels. Accordingly, many states—particularly major powers—have increasingly integrated artificial intelligence technologies into their media strategies and digital diplomacy initiatives, seeking to enhance their international image and to promote their values, culture, and policies in more sophisticated and effective ways. (Al-Kabir 2023)

However, the growing integration of artificial intelligence across public and transnational domains gives rise to complex legal and ethical challenges. These challenges pertain to the boundaries of legitimacy, the protection of privacy, and the safeguarding of fundamental rights and freedoms, in addition to the challenges arising from algorithmically embedded bias and deficiencies in transparency across decision-formulation procedures, the complexity involved in attributing legal responsibility for potential harms caused by intelligent systems. This reality also prompts fundamental questions regarding the capacity of existing legislative frameworks to respond effectively to the accelerating pace of technological change, coupled with the necessity of developing novel legal arrangements and the lack of clearly defined ethical standards steering artificial intelligence practices, within a framework grounded in responsibility and justice. (Barakat 2019)

The significance of these challenges is further amplified by the inherently transnational nature of artificial intelligence technologies, which renders their regulation a shared international concern. Addressing this challenge requires

coordinated cooperation among states and international organizations to develop governing standards that strike a balance between the imperatives of technological innovation and the requirements of protecting human dignity. In the absence of sound and effective regulation, artificial intelligence may be instrumentalized as a tool for manipulating public opinion or undermining societal trust, thereby transforming this technology from a means of soft power into a source of political and social instability. (Shehinaz, Research Ethics in the Context of Technological Advancement 2020, 259)

Against this backdrop, the present study seeks to shed light on artificial intelligence as a contemporary instrument of soft power by analyzing its legal and ethical dimensions within the framework of international politics. It aims to elucidate the opportunities that artificial intelligence offers states in enhancing their influence and global reach, while also addressing the challenges it poses to legal and ethical systems. Furthermore, the study endeavors to advance a comprehensive analytical perspective that supports the accountable utilization of artificial intelligence, while maintaining an equilibrium between technological advancement and the safeguarding of rights, and reinforces its role as a positive soft power resource in the service of development and stability at both national and international levels.

2. Research Problem

Notwithstanding the accelerated pace at which artificial intelligence technologies have evolved and the expanding scope of their use across political, media, and diplomatic domains, this expansion has not been accompanied by a parallel development in the legal and ethical frameworks governing their application. This disparity has resulted in a clear gap between an increasingly sophisticated technological reality and traditional legislative systems. Artificial intelligence has thus become an effective tool for shaping public opinion, constructing states' international images, and influencing societal preferences and orientations at both domestic and global levels, thereby reinforcing its role as a contemporary mechanism of soft power within the contemporary international system.

At the same time, the increasing reliance on artificial intelligence introduces multifaceted legal and ethical dilemmas, particularly with regard to the justification of its application in political and cultural spheres, the acceptable limits of encroachment upon personal autonomy, and the protection of information linked to individual identity. Such dilemmas are exacerbated by latent algorithmic distortions and by deficiencies in the transparency of automated decision-formation mechanisms. An important dimension of problem is exacerbated by the difficulty of determining legal responsibility for harms

arising from the use of intelligent systems, whether such responsibility lies with designers, users, or the institutions that deploy these technologies.

The research problem is also manifested in the absence or inadequacy of comprehensive regulatory frameworks in many countries—particularly developing states—when compared to more advanced regulatory experiences that have begun to establish normative legal and ethical benchmarks governing artificial intelligence. This regulatory disparity creates an unbalanced environment regarding the strategic employment of artificial intelligence as an instrument of soft power, whereby the technology may shift from a means of positive influence and cultural attraction to an instrument of manipulation, disinformation, and the erosion of societal trust.

Accordingly, The core question addressed by this research concerns the manner in which artificial intelligence may be strategically employed as a form of soft power within international politics, in a way that remains consistent with legal and ethical norms and reconciles innovation with the protection of basic rights and liberties?

This research engages with the identified problem by examining the legal and ethical considerations surrounding artificial intelligence, while also investigating possible avenues for constructing a robust regulatory framework that supports the responsible application of this technology in advancing development and fostering stability.

3. Significance of the Study

The relevance of this study derives from its focus on a key contemporary phenomenon that plays a central role in reshaping patterns of power within the international system, namely the growing reliance on artificial intelligence as a mechanism of soft power and the multifaceted legal and ethical considerations it entails. The value of this research can be articulated across both conceptual and applied dimensions, as outlined below:

3.1 Theoretical Significance

- This study broadens Arabic scholarly inquiry in international relations by presenting a legally and ethically informed analysis of artificial intelligence as a dimension of soft power. It further develops an interdisciplinary analytical framework that integrates political science, legal reasoning, and digital ethics—an approach that remains largely underrepresented in contemporary Arabic academic literature.

- It helps advance theoretical understanding of the role of emerging technologies in reshaping instruments of influence and power in international relations.
- The study aligns with contemporary research trends that emphasize digital governance and the legal regulation of artificial intelligence.
- It opens avenues for more in-depth future research on the relationship between artificial intelligence and soft power across diverse regional and international contexts.

3.2 Practical Significance

- The study provides policymakers and legislators with a clearer understanding of the legal and ethical dimensions linked to the application of artificial intelligence across public and diplomatic settings.
- It contributes to supporting efforts aimed at developing flexible and balanced national legislation to regulate the deployment of artificial intelligence and the containment of its related risks.
- It assists governmental, media, and cultural institutions in adopting responsible applications of artificial intelligence in ways that enhance societal trust.
- It supports the formulation of public policies grounded in a balanced approach that reconciles technological innovation with the safeguarding of fundamental rights and individual freedoms.

4. Research Objectives

This study seeks to achieve a set of scientific and practical objectives, including the following:

- To analyze the concept of soft power and its evolution within contemporary political thought, and to clarify the position of artificial intelligence among its modern instruments.
- To elucidate the relationship between artificial intelligence and the enhancement of states' soft power within the context of international politics and digital transformations.

• To examine and critically analyze the legal frameworks governing the use of artificial intelligence at both the national and international levels.

• To evaluate the extent to which existing legislative instruments are capable of safeguarding fundamental rights and freedoms in the context of the expanding deployment of artificial intelligence technologies.

• To explore the principal ethical challenges associated with artificial intelligence, with particular attention to issues of privacy, algorithmic bias, and the degree of transparency characterizing automated decision-making mechanisms.

• To assess how legal and ethical considerations influence the effectiveness of artificial intelligence as a tool of soft power within international politics.

• To formulate a set of practical policy-oriented recommendations aimed at contributing to the development of a balanced legal and ethical regulatory framework for artificial intelligence.

5. Research Hypotheses

The present contribution is grounded in a principal hypothesis which holds that: the deployment of artificial intelligence as an instrument of soft power contributes to enhancing states' political and cultural influence within the contemporary international system; however, its effectiveness remains contingent upon the existence of a structured legal and ethical framework that ensures the responsible use of this technology and safeguards fundamental rights and freedoms.

From this main hypothesis, the following subsidiary hypotheses are derived:

• The advancement of artificial intelligence applications is associated with an expanded capacity of states to project soft power within the contemporary international system.

• The integration of artificial intelligence into media and diplomatic practices enhances states' ability to shape public preferences and broader societal orientations.

- Existing national and international legal frameworks suffer from deficiencies in regulating the use of artificial intelligence as a soft power instrument.
- Ethical challenges associated with artificial intelligence—particularly algorithmic bias and violations of privacy—undermine its effectiveness as a soft power tool in the absence of appropriate regulatory mechanisms.
- The existence of a comprehensive legal and ethical framework contributes to maximizing the political and cultural benefits of artificial intelligence while limiting its risks to fundamental rights and freedoms.

6. Key Research Questions

This research is structured around the following guiding question:

• In what ways can artificial intelligence be strategically mobilized as a soft power mechanism within international politics so as to generate positive influence for states, while remaining aligned with legal and ethical requirements and ensuring the safeguarding of fundamental rights and freedoms?

- What is meant by soft power, and how has artificial intelligence contributed to reshaping its traditional instruments?
- What are the main domains and applications of artificial intelligence used in enhancing states' soft power?
- How does artificial intelligence influence the formation of public opinion and cultural and political preferences at the international level?

• Which legal frameworks regulate the use of artificial intelligence at the international and national levels?

• What are the principal ethical challenges arising from the application of artificial intelligence, particularly in relation to issues of privacy, algorithmic bias, and the degree of transparency in decision-formulation processes?

• To what degree do existing legal and ethical arrangements support the responsible utilization of artificial intelligence as a soft power mechanism?

• What regulatory pathways can be envisaged for the development of an integrated legal and ethical framework capable of reconciling technological innovation, the expansion of soft power capacities, and the safeguarding of fundamental rights and freedoms?

7. Methodological Framework of the Study

Given the characteristics of the research subject, a descriptive–analytical approach is employed as the methodological foundation guiding this inquiry involves conceptualizing artificial intelligence and soft power and analyzing their evolution within contemporary political and legal thought. It further entails the examination of legal texts and international and national legislation governing the integration of artificial intelligence, accompanied by an analytical review of ethical implications associated with artificial intelligence applications and their impact on human rights.

In addition, the study analyzes relevant academic literature, previous studies, and reports issued by pertinent international organizations. Where appropriate, a comparative approach is employed through the examination of selected international experiences in regulating artificial intelligence, for the purpose of identifying best regulatory practices.

8. Scope and Limitations of the present research

8.1 Thematic Scope

The study is confined to examining artificial intelligence as an instrument of soft power, with a particular focus on its legal and ethical dimensions. It does not extend to purely technical or engineering aspects of artificial intelligence technologies.

8.2 Geographical Scope

The research adopts a general international perspective, with reference to selected national models and relevant regional experiences, without undertaking an in-depth case study of any specific country.

8.3 Temporal Scope

The study covers the period from 2015 to 2025, a timeframe characterized by accelerated digital transformation and the growing expansion of artificial intelligence applications across political and diplomatic domains.

9. Key Terms of the Study

This study employs a set of core concepts that underpin its analytical framework, defined as follows:

9.1 Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Artificial intelligence may be understood as a broad category of computational systems and software applications designed to replicate selected aspects of human cognition, including learning processes, logical reasoning, analytical capacity, and decision formulation, primarily through the use of algorithmic models and large-scale data processing. Within the scope of this study, artificial intelligence is not approached solely as a technical or functional innovation; rather, it is conceptualized as a strategic instrument capable of exercising political and cultural influence. In this sense, artificial intelligence is employed in the targeting and management of digital content, the interpretation of public

opinion trends, and the construction of states' international images, thereby positioning it as one of the contemporary mechanisms through which soft power is exercised.

9.2 Soft Power

Soft power may be defined as the capacity of a state or an international actor to shape the attitudes and decisions of others through mechanisms of attraction and persuasion, rather than through coercive measures or reliance on material forms of power. Traditionally, this form of influence has been exercised through elements such as culture, value systems, public policy orientations, media outreach, and diplomatic engagement. However, within the context of accelerating digital transformation, the repertoire of soft power tools has expanded to include artificial intelligence technologies and digital communication platforms, which have assumed a pivotal role in influencing collective perceptions and shaping global public opinion.

9.3 Digital Governance

Digital governance may be understood as a framework encompassing regulatory norms, policy instruments, and institutional arrangements that oversee the deployment of digital technologies, including artificial intelligence, with the purpose of promoting transparency, reinforcing accountability, and safeguarding rights. Within the scope of this research, digital governance is approached not merely as an administrative or technical construct, but as a normative structure that shapes how digital power is exercised and constrained. Digital governance constitutes the framework that determines how artificial intelligence may be employed as a soft power instrument without compromising legal and ethical standards.

9.4 Algorithmic Bias

Algorithmic bias refers to distortions in the outcomes of artificial intelligence systems resulting from unbalanced training data or inequitable algorithmic design, leading to indirect discrimination against certain social or cultural groups. This form of bias represents one of the most serious ethical challenges facing artificial intelligence, as it may undermine its legitimacy and weaken its role as a positive soft power instrument.

9.5 Digital Privacy

Digital privacy constitutes the entitlement of individuals to safeguard their personal data against unlawful acquisition, processing, or use. The significance of this concept has increased with the growing reliance of artificial intelligence on big data, which necessitates the formulation of resilient legal frameworks capable of reconciling data use with the safeguarding of individual rights.

9.6 Digital Ethics

Digital ethics can be understood as the moral framework that informs responsible decision-making in digital environments, particularly in relation to data use, automated systems, and their broader societal impact including artificial intelligence. These principles include fairness, transparency, non-maleficence, and respect for human dignity. Digital ethics constitute a fundamental component in ensuring the social and political acceptance of artificial intelligence.

10. Review of Previous Studies

10.1 Arabic Literature

***A** study entitled "The Legal Dimensions of Using Artificial Intelligence in the upholding of rights and liberties**"**

> The study assessed existing laws governing artificial intelligence in Arab countries and determined that they remain inadequate in confronting contemporary technological issues, notably those involving data security and the determination of legal responsibility. (A. Mohammed, The Legal Dimensions of Artificial Intelligence Use 2021)

***A study entitled "Artificial Intelligence and Digital Ethics in the Modern Era."**

> This study examined the ethical challenges associated with artificial intelligence, including issues of privacy and algorithmic bias. It emphasized the necessity of integrating ethical values into the design and operation of intelligent systems in order to ensure their responsible and socially acceptable use. (Ahmed 2022)

***A study entitled "Soft Power and Digital Transformation in International Relations."**

This study focused on the impact of digital transformation on the instruments of soft power, indicating that artificial intelligence represents an advanced stage of indirect influence in contemporary international politics. (Mahmoud 2020)

10.2 Foreign Literature

***Nye, Joseph S. –** Soft Power in the Context of Digital Transformation

The study traced the transformation of soft power in the context of digitalization, concluding that artificial intelligence has become a key tool for enhancing states' cultural and political influence across cyberspace.. (J. S. Nye 2011)

Floridi, Luciano –** ***Ethics of Artificial Intelligence

This study examined the ethical dimensions of artificial intelligence, placing special emphasis on transparency-related principles accountability, and justice. It underscored that the absence of robust ethical frameworks may transform artificial intelligence from a tool of progress into a source of risk and threat, rather than a driver of societal and technological advancement. (L. Floridi, Establishing the Rules for Building Trustworthy AI. 2019)

European Commission –** ***AI Governance and Regulation

This study examined the regulatory frameworks governing artificial intelligence within the European Union. It highlighted the importance of proactive regulation in achieving a balanced approach that reconciles technological innovation in a manner that ensures the protection of core rights and liberties, emphasizing a governance model grounded in accountability, transparency, and human-centric principles. (Brussels 2020)

11. Framework of the Study

The study is structured as follows. The first section outlines the conceptual and theoretical foundations of artificial intelligence. The second section examines its legal implications, followed by an analysis of the ethical considerations associated with its use. The fourth section explores artificial intelligence as a tool of soft power. Finally, the study concludes by presenting the main findings and proposed recommendations.

I. The Conceptual and Theoretical Framework of Artificial Intelligence

With the advancement of technology and the remarkable progress achieved in the context of artificial intelligence, humanity finds itself at the threshold of a new phase of its development. For a long time, human beings have sought to represent and embody intelligence through various technological tools. With the emergence of artificial intelligence, it has become possible to develop systems based on high computational power that are capable of understanding and processing data in ways that increasingly resemble human cognitive functions. Since the earliest conceptualizations of artificial intelligence, humanity has aspired to achieve unprecedented progress across multiple domains. (Shehinaz, Research Ethics in the Context of Technological Advancement 2020)

Artificial intelligence is now widely applied in medicine, where it assists in disease diagnosis and the identification of potential treatments. It is also utilized in the automotive industry to advance autonomous driving technologies and enhance road safety. In the commercial sector, artificial intelligence contributes to improving customer experience by providing rapid and efficient responses, thereby increasing productivity and competitiveness.

Despite its transformative potential, the rapid progress of artificial intelligence has generated significant ethical, legal, and societal concerns. Key issues include threats to privacy and data security, alongside growing uncertainty about the impact of AI-driven automation on employment and social equality.

At the same time, it is essential to recognize the promising prospects that artificial intelligence may offer in addressing major global challenges, including climate change and resource scarcity. Artificial intelligence can contribute to improving weather forecasting and optimizing agricultural management, thereby supporting environmental sustainability and the preservation of the planet. However, this technological development must be approached with informed caution and responsibility. Achieving a balance between harnessing the substantial benefits of artificial intelligence and addressing its associated challenges requires coordinated efforts by governments, institutions, and individuals to establish ethical frameworks and legal regulations that govern its use and protect individual rights. (Qandilji 2008)

First: Conceptual Foundations of Artificial Intelligence and Its Uses

Artificial intelligence stands at the center of ongoing debate and optimism, given its transformative potential across all spheres of human life. Navigating this future demands not only innovation, but also responsibility, awareness, and informed decision-making. Through dialogue and cooperation, it becomes

possible to shape a future in which artificial intelligence develops in a more responsible, ethical, and sustainable manner.

Moreover, as discussions surrounding the future of artificial intelligence continue, it is crucial to consider its technical and innovative dimensions. Research and development in this area have advanced at an unprecedented pace, giving rise to new possibilities for technological progress. In particular, breakthroughs in deep learning methods and artificial neural networks have significantly enhanced the efficiency and capabilities of intelligent systems across a broad spectrum of applications.

Applications of artificial intelligence continue to diversify across multiple sectors. In healthcare, AI-assisted systems support clinicians in diagnostic decision-making and personalized care, while in education; intelligent technologies facilitate tailored learning environments that accommodate individual learner differences. In the agricultural sector, intelligent analytics are employed to improve crop productivity and to offer data-driven guidance to farmers regarding farm management and resource optimization. (Fetouh 2023)

Despite the significant opportunities offered by artificial intelligence, it is necessary to address the challenges that accompany its rapid advancement. Chief among these are the ethical and legal complexities associated with decision-making processes driven by machine-learning systems. These concerns raise fundamental questions about moral accountability and the extent to which existing legal and regulatory frameworks can ensure data protection, transparency, and responsible use.

Furthermore, the social and economic consequences of artificial intelligence warrant careful consideration, particularly in relation to labor markets. As AI adoption accelerates, employment structures may undergo substantial transformation, increasing the demand for new skills and adaptive competencies. Effectively responding to these shifts requires sustained investment in education and lifelong learning to equip the workforce with the resilience needed to navigate ongoing technological change. (Abbas 2021)

In conclusion, technology should be understood as a means to achieve human objectives rather than an end in itself. Artificial intelligence possesses significant potential as a powerful instrument for advancing human progress; however, its development and deployment must be approached with caution and responsibility, taking into account its social, legal, and ethical implications. Through cooperation, critical reflection, and informed governance, it is possible to shape a balanced and sustainable future that harnesses the capabilities of

artificial intelligence in a manner that serves the broader interests of humanity as a whole. (Qandilji 2008)

(a) Definition of Artificial Intelligence and Its Technical and Political Dimensions

Artificial intelligence represents a key outcome of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, enabling computational systems to perform tasks traditionally associated with human intelligence through advanced data-driven methods. (H. A. Mohammed 2021)

From a technical perspective, artificial intelligence is grounded in a set of core tools and methodologies, including machine learning, deep learning, natural language processing (NLP), and computer vision. These technologies enable intelligent systems to process large volumes of data, identify patterns, and generate adaptive responses that increasingly approximate human cognitive functions. (A. Mohammed, Digital Media and Artificial Intelligence 2020)

- From a political perspective, artificial intelligence has transcended its role as a purely technical instrument to become a strategic component of public policy, national security, and digital diplomacy. States increasingly employ artificial intelligence to analyze public opinion trends, manage cross-border media campaigns, support political decision-making processes, and enhance international influence without resorting to hard power.In this context, artificial intelligence has increasingly taken shape as a form of smart power, combining technological capability with political influence. (Youssef 2022)

(b) The Development of Artificial Intelligence and Its Impact on Digital Influence

Artificial intelligence has undergone rapid development since the 1950s; however, its most profound transformation emerged with the digital revolution and the widespread diffusion of the internet and social media platforms. Within this context, artificial intelligence has become capable of analyzing vast volumes of data in remarkably short periods, tailoring digital content to audience preferences, and constructing customized media discourse that influences cultural and political orientations.

In the sphere of digital influence, artificial intelligence is employed in a range of applications, including recommendation algorithms, the analysis of digital behaviors, the management of digital promotional campaigns, and the indirect dissemination of cultural and political messages. These applications have

significantly enhanced the capacity of states and institutions to exercise soft influence over other societies by shaping perceptions, preferences, and collective awareness in subtle and non-coercive ways. Consequently, artificial intelligence has emerged as an effective instrument in the reconfiguration of global public consciousness and the contemporary practice of digital influence. (J. S. Nye 2004)

(c) The Intersection of Artificial Intelligence and Soft Power

Nye's concept of soft power emphasizes influence achieved through attraction rather than coercion. Within contemporary digital environments, artificial intelligence functions as an advanced mechanism for extending soft power, with its effects becoming evident across several key dimensions, especially**:** (Russell and Norvig 2021)

- the deployment of artificial intelligence in digital media and public diplomacy;
- the dissemination of cultural values and political models through intelligent, data-driven content;
- the enhancement of states' international image through technological innovation; and
- the building of international trust through intelligent applications that respect privacy and fundamental rights.

- Accordingly, artificial intelligence has become a decisive factor in redefining soft power within the international system. Cultural influence alone no longer constitutes the primary instrument of attraction; it is now complemented by algorithmic intelligence and digital technologies, thereby broadening the reach, enhancing the precision, and strengthening the effectiveness of soft power in today's global political landscape. (L. Floridi, The Ethics of Artificial Intelligence 2019)

Second: Soft Power and Its Instruments in International Politics

(a) Theoretical Foundations and Evolution of Soft Power

The notion of soft power has become a core concept in contemporary studies of international relations. Introduced by the American scholar Joseph S. Nye in the 1990s amid the post–Cold War transformations, soft power denotes a state's capacity to shape the preferences and actions of other states and societies through attraction and persuasion, rather than through coercion, military force, or direct economic pressure. (J. Nye 2011)

Soft power is traditionally understood to rest on three principal foundations: culture, when it holds appeal for others; political values, when they are upheld with legitimacy at both domestic and international levels; and foreign policies, when they are viewed as ethical and aligned with the broader international interest. However, as the global environment has evolved, soft power has undergone a notable transformation. Its scope has expanded beyond conventional cultural tools to encompass emerging factors such as technology, digital communication platforms, innovation, knowledge production, and the digital economy.

This transformation has given rise to related conceptual developments, including the notion of *smart power*, which integrates elements of both hard and soft power. Within this evolving framework, artificial intelligence has gained prominence as a non-traditional source of influence in international politics, reinforcing its position as a key instrument of contemporary power projection. (J. S. Nye 2004)

(b) The Transformation of Soft Power Instruments in the Digital Era

Traditional soft power instruments comprise a range of mechanisms that states have historically relied upon to strengthen their influence on the international stage.. (J. S. Nye 2011) The most prominent of these include cultural diplomacy—such as the promotion of arts, literature, and language—educational exchanges and scholarship programs, international media outlets, public diplomacy initiatives, as well as engagement through international organizations and humanitarian assistance. These instruments have played a central role in shaping states' international images and fostering global acceptance. However, they have largely relied on one-way communication and have typically produced gradual, long-term effects. (Fetouh 2023)

With the advent of the digital revolution, the instruments of soft power have undergone a profound transformation. They have become faster, more widespread, and increasingly interactive, with a high degree of precision in targeting specific audience segments. This transformation has given rise to a new set of instruments, notably social networking platforms, interactive digital media, digital diplomacy, and big data analytics. Together, these developments have reshaped the character of international influence, as states are no longer the exclusive or dominant actors in the global arena. Technology companies and artificial intelligence platforms have emerged as influential actors in shaping global public opinion, thereby reshaping the dynamics of soft power in the contemporary international system. (Al-Obaidi 2022)

(c) The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Enhancing States' Soft Power

Artificial intelligence has become one of the most significant contemporary instruments for enhancing soft power, given the unprecedented capabilities it offers in data analysis, message personalization, and influence over cultural and political orientations. Through these capacities, artificial intelligence reshapes how states project attraction and influence within the international system. Its impact on states' soft power can be observed in several key domains. (Youssef 2022)

C.1 Artificial Intelligence and Intelligent Media

> Artificial intelligence contributes to the management of targeted media content, the analysis of audience interaction with political and cultural discourse, and the tailoring of messages in accordance with the cultural specificities of different societies. These practices enable states to enhance the impact of their soft power narratives while refraining from actions that could be perceived as direct interference in the domestic affairs of other states. (A. Mohammed, Digital Media and Public Diplomacy 2021)

C.2 Artificial Intelligence and Digital Diplomacy

The incorporation of artificial intelligence into digital diplomacy has significantly improved communication processes by enabling more targeted, efficient, and adaptive forms of engagement with international audiences**.** between states and societies, supported digital campaigns aimed at promoting national values and policies, and strengthened states' images as technologically advanced actors. Such applications contribute to the accumulation of symbolic capital, thereby reinforcing states' international standing and influence. (McClory, A Global Ranking of Soft Power 2022)

C.3 Artificial Intelligence and the Construction of International Image

Technologically advanced states increasingly rely on artificial intelligence to showcase their developmental and civilizational models, transforming innovation itself into a source of international attraction. In this sense, technological superiority becomes an effective soft power resource. However, this role also raises significant legal and ethical challenges, including information manipulation, algorithmic bias, and violations of privacy. These issues point to the need for robust regulation to ensure the responsible application of artificial intelligence in soft power practices. (Castells 2013)

II. Artificial Intelligence from a Legal Perspective

First: The Global Legal Framework for Artificial Intelligence

(a) International Treaties and Agreements Related to Artificial Intelligence

Despite its recent emergence, artificial intelligence has prompted early regulatory responses at the international level, driven by growing concerns over its impact on human rights, state sovereignty in digital spaces, and international security. To date, no comprehensive international treaty has been adopted that is exclusively dedicated to artificial intelligence. Instead, its regulation has been addressed through a range of relevant international agreements, declarations, and normative principles, most notably: (Shehata 2021)

Despite the relatively recent emergence of artificial intelligence, international legal thought has moved decisively toward addressing the regulatory challenges posed by this technology. This shift reflects growing awareness of the profound implications of artificial intelligence for fundamental rights, state sovereignty in digital environments, and global security. As a result, several international legal instruments—though not exclusively designed for artificial intelligence—have become central reference points for its governance.

At the foundation of this framework stands the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)**, which provides a normative basis for the protection of core rights such as privacy, freedom of expression, and equality before the law. These principles acquire renewed relevance in the context of artificial intelligence, given the increasing reliance on automated systems for data processing, surveillance, and decision-making that may affect individuals' rights and freedoms.

Building upon this foundation, the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)** offers binding legal obligations that reinforce the protection of private life, freedom of thought, and freedom of opinion. From a comparative perspective, this instrument plays a critical role in establishing legal accountability for arbitrary or disproportionate uses of artificial intelligence, particularly when such technologies interfere with personal autonomy or enable discriminatory practices.

In contrast to these human-rights–centered instruments, the **OECD Principles on Artificial Intelligence (2019)** reflect a policy-oriented regulatory approach adopted primarily by technologically advanced economies. These principles introduce a forward-looking governance model that emphasizes transparency, accountability, robustness, and human-centered design, while simultaneously

encouraging innovation. Their non-binding nature distinguishes them from traditional international treaties, yet their influence lies in shaping national AI strategies and harmonizing regulatory standards across jurisdictions. (OECD, Principles on Artificial Intelligence 2019)

A more comprehensive and explicitly ethical framework is articulated in the **UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence (2021)**. As the first global instrument dedicated specifically to artificial intelligence, it adopts an inclusive and values-based approach that integrates legal, ethical, and social considerations. The Recommendation places particular emphasis on fairness, non-discrimination, data protection, and the prevention of harmful or exploitative uses of AI systems, especially in contexts affecting vulnerable groups. (UNESCO 2021)

From a comparative legal perspective, these instruments point to an international regulatory environment that remains fragmented yet steadily evolving. Binding human rights treaties continue to provide essential normative guarantees, while soft-law frameworks—such as the OECD Principles and the UNESCO Recommendation—offer greater flexibility and responsiveness to the pace of technological innovation. Taken together, these instruments signal a broader international shift toward the structured governance of artificial intelligence, moving away from regulatory uncertainty and toward more coherent and coordinated legal approaches at the global level.

(b) Artificial Intelligence Governance in the European Union and the United States

b.1 The European Union Model for Regulating Artificial Intelligence

The European Union is widely recognized as a leading global actor in the regulation of artificial intelligence, having adopted a regulatory model grounded in risk-based assessment. Central to this approach is the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which imposes strict conditions on the processing of personal data and strengthens individual digital rights, notably the rights to information, erasure, and protection against certain forms of automated decision-making.

Complementing this framework, the European Artificial Intelligence Act (EU AI Act) introduces a structured classification of AI systems based on their potential risk, distinguishing between low-risk, limited-risk, high-risk, and prohibited applications. This graduated regulatory model reflects the EU's commitment to balancing technological innovation with the protection of fundamental rights

and public interests. The Act seeks to ban artificial intelligence systems that pose a threat to fundamental rights, while subjecting high-risk applications to stringent legal requirements. At the same time, it strives to strike a careful balance between fostering technological innovation and safeguarding individual rights and societal interests. As such, this regulatory framework stands as a pioneering example of how binding legal regulation can be effectively integrated with principles of digital ethics. (European Commission 2021)

b.2 The U.S. Regulatory Model for Artificial Intelligence

The United States has pursued a regulatory approach to artificial intelligence that differs markedly from the European model, relying primarily on sector-specific regulation rather than a unified legislative framework. This approach affords considerable flexibility to market-driven innovation while addressing AI-related risks through targeted policies. A prominent example is the White House's *AI Bill of Rights* (2022), which articulates core principles such as the entitlement to safe and effective systems, safeguards against algorithmic discrimination, protection of privacy, and transparency in automated decision-making processes.

Overall, the U.S. regulatory philosophy prioritizes economic growth and technological leadership, while attempting to limit potential rights infringements through non-binding guidelines and normative standards, rather than through comprehensive statutory regulation.. (White House 2022)

Second: Artificial Intelligence within National Legal Systems

(a) Arab and International Legislation on Data Protection and Digital Rights

An increasing number of Arab and international states have taken concrete legislative steps to enhance the protection of personal data and digital rights, largely in reaction to the growing reliance on artificial intelligence systems. This trend reflects a broader recognition of the legal and societal risks associated with automated data processing and algorithmic decision-making. As a result, national lawmakers have begun to adapt existing legal frameworks and introduce new regulatory mechanisms aimed at ensuring greater accountability and rights protection in digital environments. The following examples illustrate some of the most significant legislative responses in this regard: (Abdullah 2022)

- **In Egypt, the Personal Data Protection Law No. 151 of 2020** establishes a comprehensive legal framework governing the collection, processing, and use of

personal data, while imposing specific compliance obligations on entities that rely on intelligent and automated systems. (Barakat 2019)

 The United Arab Emirates adopted its Personal Data Protection Law in 2021, reflecting a legislative effort to harmonize national data protection standards with international norms and to strengthen confidence in digital transactions and services.

 Saudi Arabia's Personal Data Protection Law (PDPL) places particular emphasis on the protection of individual privacy and introduces regulatory controls over the cross-border transfer of personal data, signaling a growing commitment to data sovereignty and accountability.

 At the international level, the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) continues to serve as the most influential benchmark for the protection of digital rights, shaping both national legislation and global regulatory practices in the field of data governance.

(b) Accountability for Artificial Intelligence–Related Violations of Rights

Assigning legal responsibility in the context of artificial intelligence remains particularly challenging, as harm may result from the combined actions of developers, providers, users, and automated systems themselves. These actors include the developer, the operator, the user, and the entity owning the system. This complexity raises several fundamental legal questions, including:

- Who bears responsibility for erroneous or harmful decisions generated by artificial intelligence systems?
- Should algorithms be regarded merely as tools, or as legal actors with a degree of autonomous agency?
- How can fault be established in the context of complex automated decision-making processes?

Contemporary legal trends increasingly advocate for the recognition of shared liability, the imposition of transparency and algorithmic auditing obligations, and the adoption of ex ante legal accountability mechanisms for high-risk artificial intelligence systems. These developments pose significant legislative challenges, particularly for developing countries whose legal frameworks are still undergoing modernization. (L. Floridi, The Ethics of Artificial Intelligence 2019)

III. Ethical Considerations in Artificial Intelligence

First: Key Ethical Challenges of Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence constitutes a complex ethical challenge due to the expanding scope of its applications and its deep integration into the lives of individuals and societies. Ethical concerns related to artificial intelligence are no longer confined to technical considerations; rather, they extend to fundamental issues of rights, freedoms, and social justice. Within the sphere of soft power and global influence, the use of artificial intelligence gives rise to three core ethical challenges, notably those associated with information manipulation, diminished transparency in decision-making, and the protection of individual rights and freedoms. (A. Mohammed, Digital Ethics in the Age of Artificial Intelligence 2022)

(a) Personal Data Protection amid Digital Transformation

The protection of digital privacy constitutes a central ethical issue in the deployment of artificial intelligence, as AI technologies increasingly rely on large-scale personal data processing. (A. A. Mohammed 2022), given their dependence on the large-scale collection and analysis of personal data, including highly sensitive information concerning individual behavior, preferences, and political or cultural orientations. This reliance raises several ethical challenges, most notably the violation of informed consent, the use of data for undisclosed purposes, and the potential misuse of data for political or cultural manipulation. (Barakat 2019)

These risks are particularly pronounced in the context of soft power, where digital data may be employed to exert indirect influence over public opinion without individuals' awareness, thereby undermining personal autonomy and human dignity. Ethical scholarship consistently emphasizes the necessity of respecting user privacy, restricting data collection to the minimum required for legitimate purposes, and enhancing transparency in data processing policies. (Hassan 2021)

(b) Algorithmic Bias and Its Impact on Justice and Equality

Algorithmic bias denotes the emergence of unfair or discriminatory outcomes in artificial intelligence systems, often stemming from imbalances or distortions embedded within the data used to train these systems, implicit biases held by designers and developers, or a lack of diversity in data sets. Such bias can lead to serious ethical violations, including discrimination based on race, gender, or social background, the erosion of equal opportunity, and the reinforcement of cultural stereotypes.

Within the framework of soft power, algorithmic bias may distort representations of particular societies or cultures, thereby undermining digital justice and adversely affecting international relations. Contemporary ethical standards stress the importance of regular algorithmic testing, systematic review of automated outcomes, and the incorporation of fairness and non-discrimination principles into the design and deployment of artificial intelligence systems.

(c) Artificial Intelligence, Transparency, and Accountability

Autonomous digital systems —particularly those based on deep learning—raise concerns related to the so-called "black box" problem, whereby the processes through which decisions are made are difficult to understand or explain. The absence of transparency constitutes a major ethical challenge, as it compromises individuals' right to understand decisions that affect them, complicates the attribution of responsibility for errors, and undermines public trust in intelligent systems.

Ethical literature therefore calls for the provision of meaningful explanations for automated decisions, the clear allocation of legal and ethical responsibility, and the assurance of human oversight in sensitive or high-impact decision-making processes. (UNESCO 2021)

Second: Ethical Governance Strategies for Artificial Intelligence

(a) Global Ethical Standards

The international community has increasingly engaged in efforts to formulate shared ethical frameworks aimed at guiding the development and use of artificial intelligence. These initiatives reflect a growing consensus on the need for common standards to ensure responsible, rights-respecting, and human-centered AI practices. Among the most notable of these initiatives are the following:: (L. e. Floridi 2018)

- **The UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence (2021)** represents a comprehensive global ethical framework that articulates fundamental principles for AI governance, including respect for human rights, fairness and non-discrimination, transparency, accountability, and long-term digital sustainability. (Development 2019)

- **The OECD Principles on Artificial Intelligence** provide a normative foundation for the responsible development and deployment of AI systems, emphasizing their alignment with human well-being and societal

interests, alongside the promotion of robust, transparent, and accountable governance structures.

Taken together, these instruments serve as key ethical benchmarks for states and institutions, guiding the formulation and implementation of national digital strategies and artificial intelligence policies within a human-centered and responsibility-driven framework.

(b) National Experiences in Adopting Artificial Intelligence Ethics

A number of states have adopted national strategies aimed aimed at embedding ethical considerations throughout the design and implementation of artificial intelligence systems. Notable examples include: (Commission 2020)

- **The European Union**, which has embraced the concept of *Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence*, based on respect for fundamental rights, human oversight, transparency, and fairness. (Daniel Hoadlys. And Nathan |. Lucas 2018)
- **Canada**, through its *Directive on Automated Decision-Making*, which requires ethical impact assessments for intelligent systems used within governmental operations.
- **China**, which has begun developing ethical guidelines for artificial intelligence that place particular emphasis on social security and stability.

These experiences demonstrate the diversity of ethical approaches to artificial intelligence, reflecting the political, cultural, and institutional contexts of each state.

IV. Analyzing the Role of Artificial Intelligence as an Instrument of Soft Power

First: Applications of Artificial Intelligence in Enhancing International Influence

The accelerated development of artificial intelligence technologies has profoundly transformed the tools through which influence is exercised in the international arena.. Soft power is no longer confined to culture and traditional diplomacy; rather, it has become increasingly dependent on digital technologies and algorithmic intelligence. Within this context, artificial intelligence has emerged as a strategic tool for enhancing international influence through indirect and more effective means. (A. Mohammed, Digital Media and Public Diplomacy 2021)

(a) AI-Driven Practices in Media and Digital Diplomacy

Artificial intelligence has become a central component in the development of international media and digital diplomacy. It is widely employed in managing targeted media content across digital platforms, analyzing the interests of specific audiences and personalizing media messages, and operating intelligent chatbots capable of communicating with global audiences in multiple languages. In addition, artificial intelligence supports digital campaigns aimed at promoting national values and policies. (Castells 2013)

These applications have significantly enhanced states' soft power by enabling the dissemination of cultural and political messages with greater precision and lower cost, while simultaneously expanding outreach to diverse global audiences. Moreover, AI-driven digital diplomacy has enabled states to improve their international image, foster dialogue among societies, and build trust through interactive communication. Nevertheless, the effectiveness and legitimacy of this role remain contingent upon adherence to ethical and legal safeguards, so that artificial intelligence does not become a tool for misinformation or manipulation. (Youssef 2022)

(b) Social Media Data Analysis and Its Impact on Global Public Opinion

Social media platforms make extensive use of artificial intelligence–driven algorithms to monitor user interactions, infer individual preferences, and determine the prioritization of content presented to audiences**.** (McClory, The Soft Power 2022). These capabilities have enabled states and institutions to leverage big data analytics to better understand and influence global public opinion. This influence is exercised through the targeted dissemination of political and cultural messages, the measurement of public responses to foreign policies, and the identification of priority issues for different audiences.

Within the framework of soft power, such data-driven analysis enhances the capacity for indirect influence, facilitates the adaptation of cultural discourse to local contexts, and enables rapid and effective management of media crises. At the same time, such practices give rise to serious ethical and legal concerns, particularly with respect to the protection of privacy, the transparency of algorithmic processes, and the boundaries of acceptable influence over public opinion.

Second: Challenges and Opportunities of Artificial Intelligence

(a) Potential Legal and Ethical Risks

Despite the advantages that artificial intelligence offers in enhancing soft power, its use entails a range of significant risks: (Pozzi 2018) Among the most prominent are violations of digital privacy resulting from data collection without explicit consent, algorithmic bias that may lead to discrimination or the misrepresentation of particular groups, the opacity of automated decision-making mechanisms, coupled with challenges in attributing legal liability for errors or infringements of rights. (L. Floridi, Establishing the Rules for Building Trustworthy AI. 2019) .These risks constitute a genuine challenge for states, particularly given the lack of binding international legal frameworks governing the deployment of artificial intelligence in political and media contexts. (J. S. Nye 2011)

(b) Opportunities for Effectively Enhancing Cultural and Political Influence

Conversely, artificial intelligence provides substantial opportunities for strengthening states' international influence in a legitimate and ethical manner. (Daniel Hoadlys. And Nathan |. Lucas 2018) These opportunities include promoting intercultural dialogue among societies, disseminating positive values such as tolerance and international cooperation, enhancing the effectiveness of public diplomacy, and positioning innovation as a source of international attraction. By adopting clear ethical and legal strategies, states can transform artificial intelligence into a responsible instrument of soft power that contributes to sustainable development and fosters international relations based on trust and mutual respect. (Bradshaw 2019)

Conclusion

Findings and Recommendations
First: Research Findings

The study arrives at the following key findings:

1. Artificial intelligence is no longer merely a neutral technical tool; rather, it has become a strategic and influential component in the construction and enhancement of states' soft power. This is largely due to its

unprecedented capabilities in digital influence, media discourse formation, and the analysis of global public opinion.

2. Artificial intelligence has contributed to modernizing traditional soft power instruments by shifting them from slow, long-term modes of influence to more interactive and immediate forms. Its application in media and digital diplomacy has enabled states to deliver culturally and politically tailored messages to diverse audiences, thereby strengthening international influence without reliance on hard power tools.
3. Technological superiority itself has emerged as a source of international attraction, particularly amid growing competition among states for leadership in digital innovation. In this regard, artificial intelligence constitutes a central component of contemporary smart power, blending cultural influence with technological and innovative capacity.
4. With respect to the effectiveness of existing legal and ethical frameworks, the study finds that current national and international regulatory arrangements remain insufficient to keep abreast of the rapid evolution of artificial intelligence applications, particularly within political, media, and cultural spheres.
5. The absence of a binding international legal regime governing the deployment of artificial intelligence within political and diplomatic domains has resulted in states resorting to fragmented domestic regulatory approaches. Such national frameworks are predominantly confined to issues of data protection and privacy, while largely neglecting the comprehensive ethical, legal, and accountability considerations inherent in the use of artificial intelligence technologies.
6. The study further identifies weaknesses in legal accountability mechanisms for complex automated decision-making processes, alongside significant disparities between developed and developing countries in the adoption of effective artificial intelligence governance. These conclusions highlight the pressing necessity for a coherent and integrated regulatory framework that ensures an appropriate equilibrium between the advancement of technological innovation and the effective safeguarding of fundamental rights and freedoms.

Second: Recommendations

Based on its findings, the study advances the following recommendations:

1. Designing an Integrated Legal–Ethical Regime for Artificial Intelligence

The study advocates for the establishment of a coherent and balanced legal and ethical framework to regulate the use of artificial intelligence. This

framework should be anchored in fundamental principles, notably the protection of human rights and digital privacy, the promotion of transparency and explainability in automated decision-making processes, and the articulation of shared legal accountability among developers, deployers, and end-users. It should also incorporate a risk-based classification of artificial intelligence systems, drawing on the European regulatory model. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the need to align domestic legal regimes with relevant international norms, in particular UNESCO's recommendations and the guiding principles developed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

2. **Strategies for Advancing the Responsible Governance of Artificial Intelligence in Political and Cultural Contexts**
3. The study puts forward a range of practical strategies designed to promote the responsible governance and application of artificial intelligence within political and cultural contexts. These include integrating digital ethics into national artificial intelligence strategies, strengthening human oversight over sensitive and high-impact decisions, enhancing transparency in media practices involving algorithmic systems, building the capacities of governmental and diplomatic personnel in artificial intelligence governance, and encouraging international cooperation for the exchange of expertise and best practices. Collectively, these strategies contribute to transforming artificial intelligence into a positive, responsible, and sustainable soft power instrument.

Third: Proposals for Future Research on Artificial Intelligence

The study recommends opening new avenues for future research, including:

- Comparative studies examining the experiences of developing countries in employing artificial intelligence as a soft power resource.
- In-depth analytical research examining the implications of artificial intelligence for states' digital sovereignty.
- In-depth investigations into the relationship between artificial intelligence and information manipulation in international relations.
- Studies addressing the geopolitical dimensions of global competition over artificial intelligence technologies.

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