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The Algoritim votes too: AI Governance from the 2024 Lok Sabha elections to upcoming 2027 UP elections

Thesis Statement: What the 2024 LS elections revealed to us is that India's electoral governance framework was unprepared for the AI driven misinformation it witnessed, unless these gaps are addressed, the 2027 UP elections now face a heightened risk of repeat or amplified harm.

Introduction

On November 30th, as voters in Telangana queued up to cast their ballots, a seven second video had begun to circulate actively on social media. What it contained was KT Rama Rao who was a rival party leader calling people to vote for Congress, it then went on the official X account of the party and was viewed more than 500,000 times. It was then later revealed that the clip was fake (Al Jazeera, 2024).

It was only a small preview of what was to come ahead . "AI will have a resounding effect in creating the narrative," says Arun Reddy who is the national coordinator for social media at the Congress party. "The political AI-manipulated content will increase multifold, much more than what it ever was." SY Quraishi, the former chief election commissioner of India, put the stakes then even more plainly: "Even if one person is misled into believing something and that changes his mind, it vitiates the purity of the election process. Deepfakes have made the problem of rumour mongering during the polls graver by a thousand times." (Al Jazeera, 2024)

Reddy's prediction and Quraishi's warning were both proven . How did AI-driven misinformation manifest in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, how did the ECI respond, and what does this mean for regulatory preparedness ahead of the 2027 UP elections? Or, to put more simply: how was AI used and misused in the 2024 LS elections, and what does this reveal about India's readiness for the 2027 UP elections?

This paper examines the role of AI in the 2024 LS elections, taking both its legitimate uses such as campaign outreach, micro-targeting, translation and voter engagement tools and its misuse such as the use of Deepfakes, synthetic audio and video and AI assisted disinformation. It will also study the ECI's response during this period. It then moves on to asses the upcoming 2027 UP elections to check how India's preparedness of the electoral governance framework is for AI's expanding role. International examples are referenced only in passing, where relevant, the focus then stays throughout on India's Institutional & regulatory response.

What makes this study significant is the timing and scale. India has had a narrow window from 2024 LS to 2027 UP elections to address the governance gaps which were exposed by the AI driven misinformation now, before it's tested again. This time in Uttar Pradesh which is the country's largest electorate, the scale at which it will be operating is unmatched, essentially what fails to be caught in UP fails at the highest possible cost. UP's linguistic and it’s dialectical diversity makes AI generated content significantly harder to detect and debunk. If the 2024 LS elections were a preview, UP 2027 is where the consequences of the inaction would be felt most acutely.

The 2024 Lok Sabha Elections

Months later as the 2024 LS elections approached, there then repeated a similar pattern as the KT Rama Rao case but this time at a national scale. In April 2024, deepfakes of Indian celebrities such as Ranveer Singh and Aamir Khan began to circulate endorsing particular parties. This gained a significant traction. Both actors publicly denyed their involvement and even registered complains with local authorities. This use of deepfakes then became heightened, the dead were even not exempted, in February 2024, the official account of DMK, posted an AI generated audio clip of J Jayalalitha, who was a deceased political figure and she was showed delivering a speech to the young party members. (Resolver, 2024).

These were not isolated stunts. They were results of an election in which AI has now been structurally embedded in how campaigns were fought.

Political parties spent an estimate of 16 billion dollars on what became the largest election in the world, a country which is home to over 751 million internet users which is a scale that made synthetic content nearly impossible to contain once's released (GNET, 2024)

What made this election distinct was simply not that AI had been misused, but that its use and misuse comes from the same infrastructure and more often the same people. Divyendra Singh Jadoun who belongs to Rajasthan runs an AI startup, he had built a business cloning candidates' voices so they could send personalised messages on WhatsApp, addressing each voter by their name , this is a legitimate service and he priced it at roughly 125,000 rupees ($1,500) for a digital avatar, and 60,000 rupees ($720) for an audio clone. Yet the same election season, he says his company denied more than 50 requests where potential clients wanted videos and audio which were altered to target political opponents. The tools which had helped a BJP volunteer in Rajasthan reach voters with an eerie specificity about the issues that matter most to them were aimed to become the exact same tools being pitched, just as readily now for aims of character assassination (AI Incident Database, 2024).

Uttar Pradesh offers us a preview of what happens when technology collides with an already contested information environment. During the 2024 campaign, a video appeared to show Dinesh Lal Yadav, a BJP candidate in UP, in the video he was shown making disparaging remarks about PM Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. The party however quickly attempted to dismiss the video as a deepfake. But later an independent analysis found that it was actually authentic, it was a real statement, denied as fake. This is the "liar's dividend" in practice essentially, once deepfakes become a plausible explanation for literally anything, genuine accountability then becomes just as easy to deny as fabricated content is to spread (International IDEA, 2024).

India's 2024 general election which was held over seven phases between 19 April and 1 June, was contested by 969 million registered voters and 2,660 registered political parties across one million polling booths , now,that is a scale that makes AI simultaneously indispensable and at the same time heavily unmanageable. Political parties have used this for a cost efficient survey work, sentiment analysis, biometric personalization in campaigning, and essentially a faster, fraud resistant vote counting these same tools, however have simultaneously opened new avenues for manipulation (Observer Research Foundation, n.d.).

Yet the actual character of the disinformation that circulated complicates any simple "deepfake panic" narrative. The most consequential viral incidents include videos of Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath who were seen making inflammatory claims that could easily sway sensitive constituencies late in the polling cycle, additionally they were, notably, shallowfakes rather than deepfakes which means that they are cruder edits, not sophisticated AI synthesis. (Observer Research Foundation, n.d.) This aligns with a Uttar Pradesh specific study that found, of 1,858 viral WhatsApp messages analyzed across 500 mobile users, in it just 1% contained AI generated content, a gap researchers attribute to the underdevelopment of large language models or LLMs in Indian regional languages and it is the very languages in which most political misinformation actually circulates. (Tech Policy Press, 2024) Professor Mayank Vatsa of IIT Jodhpur, whose research group built the deepfake detection tool Itisaar, offers a structural explanation consistent with this finding , it is that , sophisticated deepfakes in non English languages require a scale of investment and workforce training that India has not yet committed to, which means the sparsity of AI generated content in 2024 may reflect a resource gap rather than any actual regulatory success.

Where AI's role was more so unambiguous so was in its use against women in politics. Across South Asia, women candidates were dangerously among the first targets of such technology being used to damage the truth, with AI generated sexual or character assassination content threatening not only individual reputations of women but the willingness of any women to enter electoral politics at all.

Foreign interference, while feared, was documented in only one confirmed instance , it was just before final phase polling on 1 June, OpenAI reportedly disrupted any anti BJP activity carried out by Israeli political campaign management firm STOIC, which had used generative adversarial networks to produce pro Congress English language content across all social platforms (Observer Research Foundation, n.d.).

The scale of public exposure to this uncertainty was not abstract. A study by the communications firm 23 Watts found that 91% of Delhi NCR Gen Z respondents believed misinformation could influence voting decisions, and 80% admitted that their own perceptions had actually been shaped by it. A separate survey by Social and Media Matters identified WhatsApp as the single

largest force for the spread of fake news, at 29.8% of cases, ahead of Instagram (17.8%) and Facebook (15.8%), with over a third of respondents reporting they had been directly affected by misinformation during the election. Independent verification of platform side safeguards fared a little better , researchers at the Centre for Countering Digital Hate tested four major generative AI platforms and found they could be made to produce deceptive election imagery successfully more than 40% of the time, despite each platform's own stated policies prohibiting this kind of output. Taken together, these figures suggest that whatever technical or regulatory safeguards existed on paper in 2024, they had only a limited purchase on the lived experience of the electorate encountering it in real time (Friedrich Naumann Foundation, 2025).

What this pattern of near misses and reactive governance ultimately illustrates to us is the "Liar's Dividend" in its fullest form , it is essentially a dynamic visible even beyond India's borders, as when Donald Trump and allied figures falsely claimed that footage of a large Kamala Harris rally crowd had been AI-fabricated. The lesson is that eroded trust cuts then in both directions , it does not merely allow fabricated content to spread, but allows genuine events and footage to be dismissed as fabricated once the public has been sufficiently trained to distrust what it sees. This is the same dynamic already visible in the Dinesh Lal Yadav case in Uttar Pradesh, where a real video was dismissed as fake by the candidate's own party and it is precisely this dynamic, rather than the volume of actual deepfakes, that may pose the more durable threat heading into 2027 (Observer Research Foundation, n.d.).

AI Governance

The Election Commission of India's response came after, following a Delhi High Court directive, the Election Commission then issued a non binding advisory instructing all recognized political parties to remove the AI-generated deepfakes within three hours and advised to warn the individuals responsible, expanding the previously voluntary Model Code of Conduct to cover the emerging technologies without creating any new legal obligations. (Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, 2024) Even later with the ECI's subsequent January 2025 labeling advisory was reactive rather than more anticipatory, it essentially came days after the Aam Aadmi Party faced a police complaint, it was for allegedly posting an AI-generated content of PM Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah on its own verified X account. (MediaNama, 2025) India was not

alone in this pattern and as a comparative review of the 2024 "super election year" notes, most democracies all over then relied on similarly non binding, advisory based approaches but that only then sharpens the concern rather than if anything easing it , if soft governance was the global default in 2024, and the underlying technology has only grown more capable since, the gap between AI's capability and its regulation is clearly not closing on its own. (International IDEA, 2024)

In March 2024, the Misinformation Combat Alliance, working with Meta, set up a WhatsApp helpline to detect and respond to public queries to differentiate between what was real and what was fake and fabricated content across both audio and video formats. Advocacy groups separately petitioned that the ECI and major platforms such as X, Meta, Alphabet, Snap, and OpenAI intervenes more forcefully, calling on the Commission to invoke its constitutional powers under Article 324. The pressure then on platform companies was a fairly legal one . Advocacy groups calling on X, Meta, Alphabet, Snap, and OpenAI to act were implicitly invoking the platforms' own legal exposure, it is under Section 79 of India's Information Technology Act, 2000, platforms retain "safe harbour" protection from liability for user generated content only so long as they meet certain due diligence obligations. This then gave platforms a self interested reason to act on deepfake complaints which is quite apart from any public spiritedness, and it is worth noting as a structural feature of India's governance landscape , the enforcement leverage in 2024 often ran through platforms' fear of losing legal immunity, rather than through any binding obligation imposed directly by the ECI . (Observer Research Foundation, n.d.).

India's domestic AI governance in 2024 reads less like a coherent framework than a sequence of improvisations. A November 2023 advisory required platforms to take down deepfake content within 24 hours of it being reported; in March 2024, two further advisories followed from the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, the first triggered not by an electoral incident at all, but by Google's Gemini chatbot describing PM Modi's policies as potentially "fascist." The rollout of these advisories was itself telling of an immediate and strong industry pushback led the government to issue first an ad-hoc clarification a few days later, before issuing a formal revision two weeks later which tells a pattern of announce, retreat, and revise that recurs throughout India's AI governance in this period, and one echoed in the withdrawal of

the draft Broadcast Bill, 2023, after similar criticism over vague, top down rules. (Friedrich Naumann Foundation, 2025) This is not the behavior of a state executing a plan; it is the behavior of a state reacting, incident by incident, to whatever controversy is at a single point of time in front of it. This is precisely the pattern this paper's thesis identifies as evidence of unpreparedness, and it stands in sharp contrast to the EU's AI Act, adopted 21 May 2024, which imposes fines of up to 35 million euros or 7 percent of global turnover for violations, this is important to note a stringency no part of India's current legal architecture, still reliant on a patchwork of the IT Act 2000, the Indian Penal Code, and a 2019 Voluntary Code of Ethics, comes even close to matching. (Observer Research Foundation, n.d.)

The regulatory choice facing India is not merely whether to act, but it is which base of regulation to actually adopt. Two broad logics compete globally: a "rights-based approach," which treats a given use of AI as simply legal or illegal, and a "risk-based approach". The EU chose the latter, categorizing AI systems used in "the administration of justice and democratic processes, including systems used for influencing electoral outcomes or voting behaviour" as inherently high risk, subject to its most stringent compliance requirements. India, by contrast, has not yet settled on either logic in any codified form , it is instead relying on ad hoc advisories layered on top of existing, non AI-specific law. Policy analysts have then suggested India's framework eventually should pursue several priorities simultaneously like avoiding what is termed as the "developing nation trap," in which India becomes merely a provider of resources for AI innovation led by the US and China rather than a genuine rule setter in its own right , building a clear responsibility and liability framework that distinguishes between an actor's role as consumer, supplier, or intermediary and developing harmonized technical standards for auditing and safety evaluation that function as a catalyst for innovation rather than purely a constraint . A useful comparative data point comes from California, where Governor Gavin Newsom blocked a broad AI safety bill in September 2024 over concerns about its chilling effect on industry while, just days earlier, signing three separate, narrower state laws specifically targeting AI-generated deepfakes capable of deceiving voters. This suggests a middle path which translates to broad, innovation constraining AI regulation may be politically unpalatable even in jurisdictions willing to act, while narrowly targeted, election specific deepfake law is not. India's own tentative steps in this direction include an October 2024 government consultation on establishing a national AI

Safety Institute which is a sign of movement, though one that remains, as of the 2024 election cycle, aspirational rather than operative (Observer Research Foundation, n.d.).

Alongside this, a parallel technical response was underway globally it aimed less at assigning blame after the fact than at making fabrication detectable, or unnecessary to detect, from the outset. Broadly at the time two approaches emerged one was debunking, which relies on forensic detection techniques . What it does mainly is to identify unnatural blinking patterns, lighting inconsistencies, or mismatches between speech and mouth movement and pre-emption, which relies on "content provenance," embedding meta data into audio, video, and images at the point of creation so that their origin can always be verified. This latter approach was formalized in February 2024 at the Munich Security Conference, where a Microsoft led consortium of twenty technology companies signed a tech accord explicitly addressing AI deepfake threats to elections, and has since coalesced around a shared technical standard, the Coalition for Content Provenance and Authenticity (C2PA), which certifies a piece of media's full history from creation through every subsequent edit. Yet neither approach is self sufficient , the detection technology is in a race with the AI systems being trained to defeat it, and even provenance standards depend on voluntary adoption across an industry with little incentive to slow itself down. The existence of this technical infrastructure, in other words, does not substitute for binding regulation, it only clarifies what regulation would it need to enforce (Observer Research Foundation, n.d.).

Any serious response to this threat requires a governance benchmark against which India's actual performance can be measured. One useful framework proposes four concrete safeguards . First one is mandatory watermarking of AI generated political content , second is mandatory "cooling-off" periods before votes potentially shaped by AI content , third , strict legal liability for AI-powered astroturfing as a serious electoral offense and fourth independent "algorithmic ombudsmen" empowered to audit campaign AI systems. Measured against this standard, India's January 2025 labeling advisory satisfies only the initial safeguard, and only nominally, since it remains essential non-binding , but the remaining three protections do not exist in any form within India's current framework. (Journal of Democracy, n.d.) Yet not every credible voice agrees that stronger regulation is the right immediate answer as we see in one interview based study, drawing on conversations with political consultants and AI industry practitioners, the

study found that most experts consulted believed India's understanding of AI's electoral use is still at too early a stage for strict legislation, and recommended instead a collaborative extension of the ECI's existing Model Code of Conduct rather than any new binding law. (Friedrich Naumann Foundation, 2025) This is actually worth taking seriously rather than dismissing it and, here is why, it suggests that what looks like regulatory failure from one angle can be read, from another, as regulatory caution appropriate to a genuinely uncertain technology. Whether that caution remains defensible by 2027, given Uttar Pradesh's scale and the closing gap in regional language AI capability, is precisely the question this paper will takes up in its final analysis.

Public literacy efforts, though modest, were part of this same landscape. Microsoft circulated a plain language primer on "fighting deepfakes," offering voters a simple checklist and a short self test of their own ability to detect AI manipulated content, and Indian universities began, in this period, to offer formal coursework on digital disinformation for the first time , this becomes a small but telling sign that institutional awareness of the problem was beginning to catch up with the technology generating it, even if regulation itself had not so far (Observer Research Foundation, n.d.).

Looking Ahead - The 2027 UP Elections

The next assembly election for Uttar Pradesh's 403-seat unicameral lower house, is expected in early 2027, five years after the 2022 polls, determining the 19th Vidhan Sabha and whether Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's BJP-led NDA government continues. Because UP sends 80 MPs to the Lok Sabha, the state election is often read nationally as a bellwether for federal power dynamics. (Smart Neta, n.d.) The BJP has won 255 of 403 seats in 2022, down from 312 in 2017, but retained a majority with allies totaling 273 seats. Since then, the government touts GSDP growth of 11.6% in 2023-24, exceeding India's national GDP growth of 9.6%, reaching ₹29.78 lakh crore, with per capita income tripling from ₹40,000 to ₹1.2 lakh since 2017. It also claims major security gains, crime rate 25% below the national average per NCRB 2023 data, and zero communal riots since 2017 though this is attributed partly to over 200 encounter killings, which has drawn human rights scrutiny. (Grokipedia, n.d.)

Despite these claimed gains, the BJP's seat share dropped sharply from 62 to 32 in Uttar Pradesh during the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, it is a major reversal that signals real anti incumbency risk

heading into 2027, driven by public dissatisfaction with job creation and agrarian distress (Grokipedia, n.d.).

UP has gone from Congress dominance (1950s-60s) through fragmented multi-party caste politics (1990s-2000s: SP, BSP alternating) to what's now becoming a "nascent bipolarity" between BJP and SP since 2017 (GeoJournal, 2022).

The ECI launched a door to door Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls starting November 4, 2025, involving over 1.62 lakh booth level officers, and it uncovered approximately 4 crore (40 million) voters reported as "missing" from UP's rolls. This has become explosively partisan . CM Yogi Adityanath had claimed 85-90% of these missing voters were BJP supporters, while SP leader Akhilesh Yadav accused the process of bias, alleging pressure on boothlevel officers to delete opposition leaning voters and demanding public release of SIR data to expose alleged "fake votes." Notably, a Supreme Court directive urged the ECI to take a "sympathetic view" given logistical challenges, and Booth Level Officers reported facing administrative hurdles and threats of political reprisal for incomplete verifications which means the basic administrative machinery meant to guarantee electoral integrity is already strained before any AI-generated disinformation has entered the equation (Grokipedia, n.d.).

Analysts expect a closely contested bipolar election with caste mobilization as the dominant factor. SP's Muslim support stood at 90% in 2024 and is expected to remain firm; Jatav Dalits traditionally aligned with BSP show signs of shifting toward the SP-INDIA coalition. Given OBCs and Dalits constitute over 50% of the population, any AI-generated content designed to inflame caste or communal tension would have an unusually large and receptive audience to work with (Advance (SAGE), n.d.).

Akhilesh Yadav has publicly called the election a "decisive fight to save democracy," while CM Adityanath has called it an "80:20 battle" in the BJP's favor. This kind of framing from both sides is echoed heavily in regional media and creates exactly the charged atmosphere in which fabricated content tends to spread fastest and be believed most readily, because it confirms what partisans are already expecting to be true (Grokipedia, n.d.).

What this all brings together is that these conditions describe an election environment that is already briefed for the type of manipulation seen in 2024, only with fewer of the incidental protections that limited its damage the first time. The linguistic gap that was identified by Professor Vatsa as the reason for which AI generated content stayed sparse in Indian regional languages in 2024 is now not a permanent safeguard, it was initially a temporary technical limitation . Today AI models are being trained on Indian languages at a fast pace precisely because companies smartly see the commercial value in doing so. By 2027, the same AI infrastructure that struggled to produce convincing deepfakes in Hindi, Awadhi, or Bhojpuri in 2024 may face no struggle at all, and this is at which point UP would lose the one protection that most reduced its exposure the last time around.

There was a pattern that was uncovered by researchers studying BJP WhatsApp groups in Uttar Pradesh and is the clearest indication of where any future manipulation will concentrate. Misinformation and hate speech were seen to not spread evenly, they concentrated specifically around messages about Muslims, appearing roughly ten times more often in that context than in the WhatsApp ecosystem generally. Given that the SIR controversy has already introduced a communally coded dispute over the "missing" voters, and that ECI verification procedures around identity checks for burqa clad women have already been read by the SP as targeted discrimination, the groundwork for AI-generated content to increase this specific fault line is already present, before a single fabricated video or audio clip has even been made. What happened organically through shallowfakes and cheap edits in 2024, videos of Amit Shah and Yogi Adityanath making inflammatory claims, could today be replicated with considerably more sophistication and considerably less effort by 2027, aiming at precisely the communal and caste fractures that Uttar Pradesh’s own electoral history shows are most combustible (Scroll.in, n.d.).

The Dinesh Lal Yadav case has proven to us that a real statement could be successfully dismissed as a deepfake by the candidate's own party, what it established was that in an environment already full of distrust over the SIR process and voter roll integrity, any footage which doesn’t suit which is whether genuine or fabricated, becomes deniable. This is arguably the biggest threat heading into 2027, and more than the volume of AI content itself, because it does not require AI to actually be used at scale, it only requires AI to be plausible enough as an explanation that accountability becomes optional.

What is being suggested is that the governance gaps identified across the 2024 election, non binding advisories, reactive rather than anticipatory policymaking, enforcement that depended on platforms' own legal self-interest rather than a binding obligation, nothing can be assumed to remain survivable simply because they were survivable in the past . Uttar Pradesh in 2027 removes two of the conditions that limited AI's damage in 2024 which is linguistic difficulty,now closing out , and the element of surprise, since both political parties and bad faith actors have now seen exactly what worked and what didn't. Whatever changes are made to India's AI governance framework between now and 2027 will be tested in the state with the least institutional slack to absorb a failure, the largest electorate, the most communally sensitive recent history, and, as of the ongoing SIR dispute, an electoral roll process already under public suspicion before a single vote is cast.

Analysis and Recommendations

Now we will come back to the question this paper opened with and it is how was AI used and misused in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, and what does this reveal about India's readiness for the 2027 UP elections, the evidence we have acquired across the preceding sections supports one specific and a somewhat uncomfortable answer: AI's actual footprint in 2024 was smaller than the discourse around it has suggested, but with concerns the governance framework built to respond to it was smaller still. The two failures are not the same, and conflating them risks either complacency or overcorrection. It is worth holding both facts at once. Only 1% of viral WhatsApp content in Uttar Pradesh was AI-generated, and the most damaging viral videos of the election, those of Amit Shah and Yogi Adityanath, were shallowfakes rather than deepfakes, crude edits rather than sophisticated synthesis. (Tech Policy Press, 2024) Overall this would sound like reassurance , the AI mass apocalypse feared did not manifest quite majorly in 2024.On the other hand however this paper argues, it looks like a warning that arrived early and cheaply. If crude, low effort manipulation was capable enough of reaching Union ministers and chief ministers, misleading voters, and forcing a candidate's own party to disown a genuine statement as fake, then the marginal cost of what more sophisticated AI tools could do by 2027 is worth thinking and guarding against . It is the difference between a threat that is in its current

stages underdeveloped and a threat that is currently unrewarded for developing further, and those are very different things to be complacent about.

The pattern which is established across Section III, of a government that simply only has responded to controversies rather than anticipated and prepared for them, is the paper's central piece of evidence for its thesis. The Delhi High Court had to direct the ECI into its three hour takedown rule; the January 2025 labeling advisory followed the AAP FIR rather than preceding it; the March 2024 MeitY directive was retracted within two weeks under industry pressure; the draft Broadcast Bill was withdrawn after criticism. None of these were isolated . Taken together they describe a style of governance which is practising announce, retreat, revise, that produces guidance without producing accountability. Measured against the four safeguard framework proposed in Section III, mandatory watermarking, cooling-off periods, strict liability for astroturfing, and independent algorithmic audits, India's actual regulatory architecture currently matches only with the first one , and only nominally, since even its labeling requirement carries no binding force. This is the gap the thesis is naming , it is not an absence of awareness, ECI officials, ministers, and civil society groups were clearly aware of the risk, but it is rather an absence of enforcement infrastructure capable of converting that awareness into consequence.

It would be intellectually dishonest, however, to treat the interview based counterargument raised earlier in this paper as merely a footnote to be dismissed. The experts interviewed for the Friedrich Naumann Foundation study namely political consultants, AI startups, legal practitioners with direct experience of the 2024 election, largely concluded that India's understanding of AI's electoral use remains too early stage for strict legislation, and recommended a collaborative extension of the ECI's Model Code of Conduct rather than new binding law. This is not an unreasonable position. Premature, overly broad regulation risks the same fate as some of India's own 2024 attempts, announced too quickly, drafted without knowledge , and withdrawn under justified pushback. The EU's own AI Act, discussed in this paper as a stronger comparative benchmark, will not be fully implemented until 2026, and by some accounts as late as 2030, suggesting that even the most committed regulatory efforts globally are moving more cautiously rather than swiftly going forward . What this paper argues, though, is that caution and inaction are not the same thing, and India's 2024 pattern looks considerably more like the latter than the former. A government which is capable of issuing an

advisory within days of the AAP FIR was surely capable of a speed when a specific incident demanded it; the absence of comparable speed applied proactively, before rather than after such incidents, suggests a choice about priorities rather than a genuine technical or institutional constraint.

Uttar Pradesh now sharpens this argument rather than complicating it. The very conditions that limited AI's damage in 2024, the linguistic gap in the regional language model training, and the element of surprise, both political actors and bad faith operators seeing this technology deployed at scale for the first time, are precisely the conditions which are least likely to hold by 2027. An electorate which is already destabilized by the SIR controversy and its nearly 40 million "missing" voters, and a state where misinformation has been shown to concentrate roughly tenfold around communal targeting, the marginal capability gained by AI models between 2024 and 2027 does not need to be large to produce outsized harm. It only needs to close the specific gap which is the regional language fluency, that currently constrains it.

On this basis, several concrete recommendations now follow, each grounded directly in gaps identified across this paper .

First, the ECI which had introduced an existing three hour takedown rule as discussed , the labeling advisory should be placed on a statutory footing well before the 2027 UP election cycle begins, which will close the existing gap between guidance and obligation that has defined India's approach since 2023. This does not require the scale or complexity of the EU AI Act; it requires converting what already exists with us as voluntary practice into binding requirement, with defined penalties for non-compliance, rather than introducing an entirely new regulatory architecture from start .

Second, given that AI had a limited footprint in 2024 was mainly attributed to India's regional language gap rather than any deliberate restraint, the governance response should be to invest directly in regional language deepfake detection capacity, of the kind Professor Vatsa's team at IIT Jodhpur has already begun with Itisaar, specifically aiming at Hindi, Awadhi, Bhojpuri, and other linguistic varieties spoken across Uttar Pradesh, rather than tools built primarily for English or Hindi only content.

Third, the platform accountability in India currently runs largely through Section 79's safe harbour incentive structure, which means , platforms act to protect their own legal immunity rather than under any binding obligation to the commission directly. Formalizing platform obligations specific to election periods, rather than relying on the indirect leverage of safe harbour risk, would reduce the current dependency on platforms' self-interest as the primary enforcement mechanism.

Fourth, given the demonstrated concentration of misinformation around communal targeting in UP specifically, any public literacy or awareness campaign modeled on efforts like Microsoft's deepfake detection primer should be built and deployed in Uttar Pradesh's own regional languages then and well ahead of the 2027 cycle, rather than as an afterthought following the pattern of reactive response this paper has been documenting .

None of these recommendations require India to resolve the deeper, unsettled question of which regulatory philosophy, rights based or risk based, it will have to ultimately adopt. What they require simply is acknowledgment that the 2024 election, whatever its actual scale of AI driven harm, functioned as a genuine warning rather than a false alarm, and that Uttar Pradesh in 2027 offers considerably less margin for the same reactive pattern to hold. The 2024 Lok Sabha elections revealed that India's electoral governance framework was unprepared for the AI driven misinformation that came through . Whether the 2027 UP elections repeat that failure at a far greater scale, or whether the intervening years are used to close the specific, identifiable gaps this paper has traced, remains, as of this writing, an open question rather than a settled outcome.

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