

Artificial Intelligence and Fake News Regulation in Thailand's Political Sphere: A Decadal Perspective

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Abstract: Over the past two decades, Thailand's political landscape has been profoundly reshaped by digital platforms, which have enhanced public engagement but also facilitated the rapid spread of fake news. This dual impact has undermined democratic processes, eroded public trust, and created significant challenges for regulation. During the 2010s, the rise of social media transformed information dissemination, offering new opportunities for civic participation while also serving as a conduit for misinformation. In the 2020s, artificial intelligence (AI) emerged as a promising tool to combat fake news, leveraging technologies like Natural Language Processing (NLP) and automated fact-checking. However, AI's implementation faced critical challenges, including linguistic and cultural complexities, algorithmic biases, and the absence of robust governance frameworks. These decades offer valuable lessons, particularly the limitations of manual interventions and the need for ethical oversight in AI deployment. Looking ahead to the 2030s, this article outlines a strategic roadmap for Thailand to address the evolving threat of fake news. The proposed strategies emphasize the development of AI-specific policies, investment in technical innovation, fostering public-private collaboration, promoting digital literacy, and advancing regional cooperation. By adopting these measures, Thailand can enhance its capacity to combat misinformation while safeguarding democratic values and positioning itself as a leader in misinformation regulation within the Southeast Asian region.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Fake News, Political Sphere.

1. Introduction

The digital revolution of the 2010s marked a significant turning point in Thailand's political discourse, with platforms like Facebook, LINE, and Twitter emerging as key arenas for civic engagement and public debate. By 2015, over 70% of Thailand's population had access to the internet, making it one of the most digitally connected countries in Southeast Asia [1]. However, alongside these opportunities came significant challenges. Fake news, often spreading faster than verified information, became a powerful tool for political manipulation, influencing elections, protests, and public opinion. During the 2019 general elections, for example, misinformation campaigns featuring fabricated polls and doctored images flooded social media, swaying voter perceptions and exacerbating political polarization [2]. The rapid dissemination of fake news outpaced

traditional regulatory responses, exposing critical gaps in the country's ability to maintain public trust and democratic integrity.

In the 2020s, artificial intelligence (AI) emerged as a promising solution to tackle the scale and complexity of fake news. Technologies like Natural Language Processing (NLP), machine learning, and automated fact-checking provided scalable tools to analyze and counter disinformation in real time [3]. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, AI-driven chatbots were deployed to debunk myths about vaccines and treatments on platforms like LINE, showcasing the potential of AI to combat misinformation [4]. However, the adoption of AI revealed new challenges, including algorithmic biases, ethical dilemmas, and governance gaps. These lessons highlight the urgent need for a balanced approach that integrates technological innovation with robust ethical oversight to address the evolving threat of fake news.

As Thailand moves into the 2030s, a forward-looking strategy is essential to combat the growing sophistication of misinformation. This article identifies five key pillars for tackling fake news in the coming decade: strengthening AI governance through comprehensive policies and oversight, enhancing technical capabilities to address linguistic and cultural nuances, fostering public-private collaboration for scalable solutions, promoting digital literacy to empower citizens, and advancing regional and global cooperation [5]. By adopting these strategies, Thailand can address the multifaceted nature of fake news and position itself as a regional leader in misinformation regulation, safeguarding democratic values in an increasingly complex digital landscape.

This article provides a comprehensive analysis of Thailand's journey from manual interventions to AI-driven solutions, offering insights into the lessons learned from the 2010s and 2020s and actionable recommendations for the 2030s.

2. The Role of Social Media in Thailand's Political Discourse: Challenges and Impacts

The 2010s marked a significant transformation in Thailand's information landscape, with platforms like Facebook, LINE, Twitter, and YouTube becoming integral to political discourse.

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With one of the highest social media penetration rates in Southeast Asia by the mid-2010s, these platforms served as vital tools for political engagement, activism, and information dissemination [1]. Social media democratized political participation, allowing citizens to voice opinions, organize movements, and challenge traditional media censorship. Notably, platforms such as Twitter and Facebook played a pivotal role during the student-led pro-democracy protests of the late 2010s, where activists mobilized support and shared information despite state-imposed restrictions on conventional media [2].

However, this decentralization of information flow also fostered an environment ripe for misinformation. The 2019 general elections illustrated how political parties relied heavily on social media for campaigning, but this also opened the door to fake news campaigns. Fabricated news stories, doctored images, and manipulated videos were widely circulated to discredit opponents and sway voter opinions. Similarly, during the 2014 military coup, misinformation on social media was weaponized to legitimize the regime's actions while undermining opposition voices [6]. The pandemic era further highlighted the risks, with false information about COVID-19 vaccines and treatments spreading rapidly, exacerbating public anxiety and mistrust in official narratives [7].

Social media algorithms amplified these challenges by prioritizing sensationalist content designed to maximize engagement, often at the expense of factual accuracy [5]. This dynamic created echo chambers, where users were primarily exposed to content reinforcing their existing beliefs, deepening political polarization and reducing opportunities for balanced discourse. These challenges underscore the dual-edged nature of social media in Thailand's political discourse, where its potential for civic empowerment is counterbalanced by its vulnerability to manipulation and misinformation.

3. Evolution of Fake News Regulation

A. Lessons from the 2010s

The 2010s marked a transformative period for Thailand's digital landscape, characterized by a rapid increase in internet penetration and the widespread adoption of social media platforms. By the mid-2010s, over 70% of the population had internet access, and platforms like Facebook, LINE, YouTube, and Twitter became integral to communication, entertainment, and information exchange. This digital revolution profoundly reshaped Thai society, particularly in the political sphere, where social media served as both a catalyst for public engagement and a conduit for misinformation. Social media's accessibility and real-time connectivity made it ubiquitous, with Facebook alone amassing over 50 million Thai users by the late 2010s, one of the highest user bases per capita globally. LINE gained traction among older demographics, while platforms like YouTube and Twitter became dominant for video content and public discourse.

Beyond personal communication, social media emerged as a powerful force in reshaping political discourse and mobilizing civic engagement. Platforms provided decentralized spaces for

citizens to discuss policies, express dissent, and coordinate protests, circumventing traditional media often perceived as biased or censored. For example, during the 2014 anti-government protests and the 2019 student-led pro-democracy demonstrations, activists relied heavily on Facebook and Twitter to disseminate information, organize logistics, and rally support. These platforms empowered marginalized voices and democratized access to political conversations, enabling citizens to challenge the status quo. However, this decentralization also facilitated the spread of unverified information. The absence of gatekeeping mechanisms, coupled with algorithms prioritizing sensationalist content, created fertile ground for fake news and propaganda, exacerbating political polarization and eroding institutional trust.

The 2019 general elections vividly illustrated the impact of fake news on Thailand's political landscape. Social media platforms were inundated with misinformation campaigns targeting candidates and parties. Manipulated images, fabricated polls, and false news stories circulated widely, shaping voter perceptions and sowing distrust. Algorithms designed to maximize user engagement amplified these issues by favoring emotionally charged or sensational content, often at the expense of accuracy. This dynamic also contributed to the rise of echo chambers, where users were primarily exposed to content aligning with their existing beliefs, reinforcing biases and deepening societal divisions. These challenges highlighted the dual-edged nature of social media—its potential to democratize information and empower civic participation, juxtaposed with its vulnerabilities to exploitation and misuse. The lessons from the 2010s underscored the need for a more sophisticated and proactive approach to combating misinformation in the decades that followed.

B. The Role of AI in the 2020s

The 2020s saw the introduction of AI-driven tools, offering significant advancements in combating fake news through Natural Language Processing (NLP) and automated fact-checking. These technologies provided scalable solutions capable of analyzing vast amounts of digital content in real-time. However, their effectiveness was limited by several challenges. The tonal nature of the Thai language and the prevalence of regional dialects posed significant hurdles for AI accuracy, while biases in training data often led to uneven enforcement. Moreover, the absence of comprehensive governance frameworks for AI applications raised critical concerns about accountability, transparency, and ethical use [3]. These limitations highlight the need for not only technological innovation but also robust governance and ethical oversight to ensure AI's effective deployment in misinformation regulation.

The 2020s marked a transformative period in Thailand's battle against fake news, as artificial intelligence (AI) emerged as a powerful tool for detecting and mitigating misinformation. Technologies like Natural Language Processing (NLP) and machine learning allowed AI systems to analyze vast amounts of digital content in real-time, identifying patterns of misinformation with unprecedented speed. NLP models

tailored to the Thai language, including its tonal structure and complex syntax, were developed to enhance the accuracy of misinformation detection, while machine learning algorithms adapted dynamically to new forms of disinformation, such as deepfakes and manipulated images. During the COVID-19 pandemic, AI-driven chatbots integrated with the LINE platform helped verify health-related claims, dispelling fake news about vaccines and treatments. These tools provided real-time responses to user inquiries, significantly reducing the spread of false information. Similarly, automated fact-checking tools were employed during the 2019 general elections to monitor political advertisements and flag fabricated stories, offering a glimpse into AI's potential for safeguarding democratic processes [6].

However, despite its promise, AI implementation in Thailand faced significant challenges, often exacerbated by the country's linguistic and cultural diversity. AI struggled to effectively process regional dialects, such as Isan or Southern Thai, and adapt to the common practice of code-switching between Thai and English on social media platforms. This limitation occasionally led to inaccuracies in identifying misinformation. For example, during politically sensitive events, AI systems inadvertently flagged legitimate content from activists, sparking accusations of censorship [7]. Algorithmic biases also posed ethical concerns, with training datasets sometimes reflecting societal or political biases that influenced content moderation decisions [8]. Additionally, the absence of robust governance frameworks to regulate AI-driven systems left critical gaps in accountability and transparency, raising public skepticism about their fairness and impartiality. To maximize AI's effectiveness while addressing these challenges, Thailand must invest in localized AI models, establish clear ethical standards, and foster public trust through transparent and inclusive policymaking.

On a global scale, countries such as Singapore and Estonia offer valuable insights into how AI can be effectively governed and utilized. Singapore, for instance, established the Model AI Governance Framework to provide guidelines for the ethical deployment of AI across sectors, emphasizing transparency, fairness, and accountability. Estonia's use of AI in public services includes real-time fact-checking tools integrated into government communication channels, enabling swift responses to misinformation during crises. Thailand can draw inspiration from these initiatives to develop its own governance frameworks, tailored to its cultural and linguistic nuances. By fostering public-private collaboration and engaging civil society in the policymaking process, Thailand can create an inclusive and transparent AI governance structure that promotes public trust while addressing the challenges of misinformation.

The integration of AI in misinformation regulation during the 2020s also highlighted the need for a multi-stakeholder approach to ensure its effective and equitable deployment. Collaborative efforts between the government, private sector, and civil society were limited, often leading to fragmented initiatives and inconsistencies in implementation. For instance, while tech companies like Facebook and LINE introduced AI tools to monitor content, these efforts were not always aligned

with Thailand's unique sociopolitical context, resulting in gaps in enforcement. Additionally, public awareness of AI's role in combating fake news remained low, further complicating its adoption. Many citizens were unaware of how AI systems functioned or the potential risks they posed, such as privacy concerns and the potential misuse of personal data. To bridge these gaps, Thailand must prioritize capacity-building initiatives, such as fostering partnerships with international organizations to develop expertise, providing public education on AI technologies, and creating a unified framework that ensures consistency and accountability across all stakeholders. By addressing these systemic issues, Thailand can fully harness AI's potential to counter fake news while maintaining public trust and safeguarding democratic values.

4. The Path Forward: Strategies for the 2030s

To effectively combat the growing threat of misinformation, Thailand must adopt a proactive and multi-faceted strategy in the 2030s. Central to this approach is the strengthening of AI governance through the development of comprehensive legal frameworks that address key issues such as ethics, transparency, and accountability. These frameworks should define clear boundaries for AI applications in misinformation regulation, ensuring that they respect democratic principles and human rights. Establishing an independent oversight body will also be critical for monitoring AI systems, conducting regular audits, and ensuring fair and impartial enforcement, thereby fostering public trust in these technologies.

Enhancing technical capabilities will be equally important to ensure AI tools are effective and adaptable to Thailand's unique linguistic and cultural context. Investments should focus on refining Natural Language Processing (NLP) models tailored to Thai's tonal nature and regional dialects, as well as building national data repositories that support unbiased and diverse AI training datasets. These repositories should be curated collaboratively by government agencies, academic institutions, and private entities to ensure inclusivity and accuracy, ultimately improving the reliability and applicability of AI systems in detecting misinformation.

Public-private collaboration will play a pivotal role in scaling these solutions. Partnerships between the government, tech companies, academia, and civil society can facilitate the development of innovative and scalable AI tools. Additionally, targeted support for startups specializing in misinformation detection technologies can drive localized innovations tailored to Thailand's specific challenges. Such collaborations should also aim to establish industry-wide standards for ethical AI deployment, ensuring consistency and accountability across all sectors.

Promoting digital literacy among citizens is another essential component of this strategy. Nationwide campaigns should be launched to educate the public about identifying fake news and understanding AI's role in combating misinformation. Integrating media literacy programs into school curricula will empower future generations to critically evaluate digital content and resist misinformation. Tailored outreach programs for vulnerable groups, such as rural populations and older adults,

can bridge the digital literacy gap and ensure that all segments of society are equipped to navigate the digital information landscape.

Finally, advancing regional and global cooperation is vital to addressing the transnational nature of misinformation. Collaborating with ASEAN nations to establish shared standards for AI governance will help harmonize efforts across Southeast Asia, while engagement with international organizations can provide Thailand access to best practices, cutting-edge technologies, and technical expertise. Such partnerships can enhance interoperability among AI systems, facilitating a coordinated response to misinformation that transcends national borders. By implementing these strategies, Thailand can position itself as a regional leader in combating fake news, safeguarding democratic values, and fostering a more informed and resilient society in the digital age.

5. Thailand's Challenges in Leveraging AI

Thailand's adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) to combat fake news is hindered by a combination of technical, regulatory, and ethical challenges unique to its sociopolitical and linguistic context. While AI offers promising solutions to address the rapid spread of misinformation, its implementation in Thailand requires overcoming significant barriers that threaten to undermine its effectiveness and fairness.

A. Linguistic Complexity

The Thai language presents significant challenges to the effective application of AI, particularly in the field of Natural Language Processing (NLP). As a tonal language with five tones, a single word can have multiple meanings depending on its pronunciation, complicating the development of NLP models that can accurately interpret and process Thai text or speech. Additionally, Thai's nuanced syntax, which lacks spaces between words and often relies heavily on contextual cues, makes it difficult for AI systems to distinguish between phrases or accurately assess sentiment. Further complicating matters are Thailand's numerous regional dialects, such as Northern Thai, Isan, and Southern Thai, each with distinct vocabulary, syntax, and pronunciation. Most AI systems are trained on standard Thai, limiting their effectiveness in regions where dialects dominate communication. Moreover, the widespread practice of code-switching—blending Thai with English in social media and online communication—adds another layer of complexity, requiring AI systems to navigate mixed-language text to detect and address misinformation effectively. Addressing these linguistic challenges necessitates substantial investments in localized AI development, including the creation of large, annotated datasets that capture the full diversity of Thai language usage across tones, dialects, and contexts.

B. Regulatory Gaps

Thailand's legal and regulatory framework for combating fake news struggles to keep pace with the rapid evolution of digital technologies. Existing measures, such as the Cybercrime Act, are largely punitive, focusing on penalizing individuals

who disseminate false information through fines or imprisonment. While these punitive measures may deter some bad actors, they do little to address the systemic spread of fake news or prevent its creation. Furthermore, Thailand lacks comprehensive AI-specific policies to govern the ethical use of AI in misinformation regulation, leaving ambiguity around critical issues such as accountability, data privacy, and transparency in AI-driven content moderation. Another challenge is the limited collaboration among key stakeholders. Effective regulation requires a coordinated effort between the government, private sector, and civil society; however, in Thailand, these groups often operate independently, resulting in fragmented and inconsistent approaches. Compounding these issues are cross-border challenges, as much of the fake news circulating in Thailand originates from foreign sources or is amplified by global platforms like Facebook and Twitter. The absence of international agreements or regional frameworks on misinformation regulation further complicates Thailand's ability to address these transnational threats. To bridge these regulatory gaps, Thailand must adopt proactive strategies, including the integration of AI-specific guidelines into its legal framework and fostering greater collaboration among stakeholders across sectors and borders.

C. Ethical Concerns in AI Regulation

The use of AI to combat fake news in Thailand has raised significant ethical concerns, particularly in a politically sensitive environment where misinformation and political expression often overlap. One major concern is the potential for bias in AI models, which are only as reliable as the data they are trained on. For example, during the 2020 student-led pro-democracy protests, activists reported that their posts on social media platforms were disproportionately flagged or removed by AI-driven content moderation tools. These incidents sparked allegations of censorship and raised questions about whether the AI systems were inadvertently favoring state narratives or being influenced by biased training datasets. Such occurrences highlight the ethical dilemma of balancing the regulation of fake news with the protection of free speech, especially in politically charged contexts.

Another critical issue is the lack of transparency and accountability in AI-driven systems. Many AI tools operate as "black boxes," making it difficult for users to understand how decisions are made to flag or remove content. This opacity erodes public trust in these systems, particularly when controversial or politically sensitive content is moderated. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, misinformation about vaccines was aggressively targeted, but some legitimate debates about vaccine efficacy and government policies were also flagged, leading to confusion and mistrust. Transparency mechanisms, such as clear explanations of why content is flagged and opportunities to appeal AI decisions, can mitigate these concerns and build public confidence in AI systems.

The potential misuse of AI for surveillance and political control further exacerbates public skepticism in Thailand, where government-led digital initiatives have historically faced criticism for infringing on privacy and civil liberties. For

instance, the Cybersecurity Act of 2019, criticized for granting the government broad surveillance powers, has heightened fears that AI tools could be used to monitor dissent rather than combat misinformation. Addressing these fears requires more inclusive and participatory policymaking. Engaging civil society organizations, academia, and independent experts in the development and oversight of AI systems can help ensure that these tools are designed and deployed ethically, with safeguards to prevent misuse.

To resolve these ethical concerns, Thailand must adopt a transparent and inclusive approach to AI governance. This includes establishing independent oversight bodies to audit AI systems and publishing regular reports on their performance and impact. Public awareness campaigns can educate citizens about how AI operates and how it safeguards their rights, dispelling misconceptions and promoting trust. Furthermore, implementing clear and enforceable regulations on data privacy and algorithmic accountability can ensure that AI systems respect individual rights and democratic principles. By prioritizing transparency, inclusivity, and accountability, Thailand can address ethical challenges while leveraging AI's potential to combat fake news in a way that aligns with societal values and expectations.

D. Capacity and Resource Constraints

Thailand's ability to leverage AI for misinformation regulation is limited by significant resource and capacity constraints. One major challenge is the shortage of AI experts and researchers with the necessary skills to develop and implement advanced AI systems tailored to the country's needs. For instance, while countries like Singapore have established government-backed AI research centers, Thailand lags behind in fostering such initiatives. Without sufficient local expertise, Thailand remains heavily dependent on foreign technologies, which are often not designed to address its specific linguistic and cultural challenges.

Financial barriers further exacerbate the problem. Developing AI technologies is resource-intensive, requiring substantial investments in infrastructure, data collection, and training. For example, the Thai government's reliance on smaller budgets for tech initiatives limits its ability to compete with wealthier nations like Japan or South Korea in adopting cutting-edge AI tools. Smaller organizations and government agencies struggle to afford the high costs of development, leaving gaps in their ability to scale AI-driven misinformation regulation.

Moreover, Thailand's dependence on foreign AI solutions, such as moderation tools from Facebook or Google, creates further challenges. These systems, developed primarily for Western contexts, are ill-equipped to handle the complexities of the Thai language, such as tonal variations and mixed-language code-switching. Adapting these tools requires additional resources and technical expertise, straining existing capacities. To overcome these challenges, Thailand must prioritize capacity-building initiatives, such as funding AI research through university partnerships and fostering collaborations with international organizations. For instance, partnering with

UNESCO's AI research programs could provide access to technical expertise and funding, helping Thailand develop localized solutions that address its unique requirements.

E. Social and Political Sensitivities

Implementing AI in Thailand is further complicated by its politically sensitive environment. The country's deeply polarized political climate increases the likelihood that AI tools will be perceived as partisan. For example, if an AI system disproportionately flags content from pro-opposition groups during a political crisis, it could fuel accusations of bias and deepen mistrust. A similar controversy arose during the 2020 student-led protests in Thailand, where activists accused social media platforms of unfairly censoring their posts under government pressure. These perceptions can undermine the credibility of AI-driven content moderation, reducing its effectiveness.

Public skepticism about government-led initiatives also poses a significant hurdle. Concerns about the potential misuse of AI for surveillance or political censorship are widespread. For instance, Thailand's Cybersecurity Act, criticized for granting the government broad powers to monitor digital activity, has heightened fears that AI tools could be weaponized against dissenting voices. Building trust through transparency and accountability is crucial to mitigating these concerns. Clearly communicating how AI systems are designed and governed—along with providing oversight by independent, multi-stakeholder bodies—can help foster public confidence.

To illustrate, Norway's transparent approach to AI governance, which involves regular public reporting on the functioning of AI tools, offers a model for Thailand. Additionally, involving civil society and independent organizations in oversight could alleviate fears of government overreach. For example, collaborating with groups like the Thai Netizen Network to ensure fair and ethical AI deployment would build trust and inclusivity. Addressing these social and political sensitivities is essential for creating an equitable and transparent approach to leveraging AI in misinformation regulation.

6. Conclusion

The 2030s represent a pivotal decade for Thailand to redefine its approach to combating fake news, as the challenges posed by misinformation continue to evolve alongside advances in digital technologies. By fully leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) and fostering a digitally literate society, Thailand has the opportunity to not only address the spread of fake news but also strengthen its democratic processes and rebuild public trust in institutions. The integration of AI into misinformation regulation offers immense potential for scalability, accuracy, and adaptability. However, these advancements must be paired with robust governance frameworks to ensure ethical and transparent implementation, preventing unintended consequences such as algorithmic biases or infringements on freedom of expression.

To achieve these goals, Thailand must focus on strengthening governance through comprehensive legal frameworks that

address AI ethics, transparency, and accountability. Establishing independent oversight mechanisms will be crucial to ensuring impartiality and public confidence in the deployment of AI systems. Moreover, advancing technical capabilities, such as refining Natural Language Processing (NLP) models and developing national data repositories, will enhance AI's ability to effectively navigate Thailand's linguistic and cultural complexities. Simultaneously, fostering public-private collaboration, including partnerships with tech companies, startups, and academic institutions, can accelerate innovation while ensuring that solutions are scalable and locally relevant.

Equally important is the need to empower citizens through digital literacy initiatives. Public awareness campaigns and the integration of digital and media literacy into school curricula will equip individuals with the tools to critically evaluate online content and resist misinformation. Targeted outreach programs for vulnerable groups, such as rural communities and older demographics, can help bridge the digital divide, ensuring inclusivity in Thailand's fight against fake news. Additionally, Thailand must embrace regional and global cooperation to address the transnational nature of misinformation. Collaborating with ASEAN nations on shared standards for AI governance and engaging with international organizations to adopt best practices can position Thailand as a regional leader in misinformation regulation.

Ultimately, by combining technological innovation with ethical oversight and citizen empowerment, Thailand can build a resilient, well-informed society capable of navigating the

complexities of the digital age. These efforts will not only safeguard democratic values but also strengthen public trust and institutional credibility. As the 2030s unfold, Thailand has a unique opportunity to set a benchmark for effective misinformation regulation in Southeast Asia, demonstrating the power of technology and collaboration in fostering a more equitable and informed digital future.

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