The Effects of Artificial Intelligence on Nigerian Interstate Relations: The Historical Perspective

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Abstract

This paper explores the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on interstate relations in Nigeria through a historical lens, outlining the technological, political, and institutional pathways that have influenced the relationship between AI and inter-state relations in Africa's most populous country. Nigeria's 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory is a complex federal system where the allocation of resources, political power, security and developmental mandates across the state lines has always been a bone of contention. The rise and spread of artificial intelligence technologies, including machine learning, natural language processing, computer vision, predictive analytics, and autonomous systems, are now changing the nature of how Nigerian states interact, compete, cooperate, and conflict. This work examines the impact of AI on interstate resource competition, security cooperation and rivalry, electoral politics, economic and trade relations, and social service provision, drawing on theories of technological governance, digital political economy, and the historical sociology of the Nigerian state. This research effort contends that the absence of intentional institutional mechanisms for equitable AI governance at the federal level could lead to the further entrenchment of the current asymmetries between technologically advanced and technologically marginalised states, which have historically been a source of interregional inequality and political tension that has posed a threat to Nigerian national cohesion. The paper ends with practical suggestions for a national AI governance architecture that is inclusive.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Interstate Relations, Digital Governance, Technology Policy, Interregional Inequality,

Introduction

The emergence and quick spread of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology in the early 21st century is one of the most significant changes in the global political economy since the industrial revolution. In all spheres of human life economic production, public administration, security, health, agriculture, political communication, etc. AI is transforming the circumstances in which states, institutions, communities and individuals pursue their interests and deal with their conflicts (Dafoe, 2018; Floridi et al., 2018). AI adds a new layer of complexity to existing conflicts and provides new conflict arenas in federal systems with

complex historical cleavages, uneven growth and disputed resource allocation, of which Nigeria is perhaps the most salient African example.

Historically interstate relations in Nigeria have been shaped by base-line tensions such as the North-South developmental and cultural dichotomy, competition for the allocation of oil revenues collected by the federal government, conflicts between people of different ethnic and religious groups over political representation, contested demarcation of states boundaries, competition over hosting of federal infrastructure and deep disagreements over the appropriate structure of fiscal federalism (Suberu, 2001; Falola and Heaton, 2008). These tensions, which stem from the administrative decisions of colonialism and had grown even more pronounced with decades of military dictatorship and oil-rent politics, have led to a political environment where state identity is felt more than national identity and inter-state cooperation is often overshadowed by the zero-sum distributional competition (Osaghae, 2011).

This article fills a great lacuna in the current literature on AI governance in Africa, which focuses on the national level (Gwagwa et al., 2019; Mutanga and Abebe, 2020) while neglecting the sub-national and interstate aspects that are key in highly federal nations like Nigeria. The article takes a historical approach, tracing the current impacts of AI on interstate relations in Nigeria as well as the longer history of technology and political dynamics that have informed the context of AI adoption. Starting from conceptual foundations, moving to history, to current analysis, and finally, to policy recommendations.

Definition of Concepts and Theoretical Framework

Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the creation and use of computational systems that can perform tasks, which would otherwise necessitate human cognitive functions such as reasoning, learning, perception, language understanding and problem-solving (Russell and Norvig, 2020). AI today is a wide spectrum of technologies such as machine learning (ML) systems that get better with experience, deep learning (DL) systems based on neural networks that are capable of processing high dimensional data, natural language processing (NLP) systems that understand and generate human language, computer vision systems that interpret visual information, and robotics and autonomous systems that operate with varying degrees of human supervision. In the context of this article, AI encompasses any algorithmic, data-driven system of decision support or automation which has a material impact on the governance capacity, security capability, economic competitiveness or political communication landscape of Nigerian state actors (Dafoe, 2018).

Interstate Relations

Interstate relations, for the purposes of this article is the formal and informal communication and interaction between Nigeria's constituent political and administrative units the states and between them and the federal government and between them and other external actors working at the sub-national level cooperative, competitive and conflictual within a state system. This conceptualisation is based on the domestic equivalent of international relations theory, in which states are strategic actors with distinct interests, resources and capabilities, and operate within the confines of a federal constitution (Agranoff and McGuire, 2003). The

interstate relations in Nigeria are influenced by formal institutional framework (revenue allocation formula, National Economic Council, Council of State and state boundary commissions) and informal relationships (personal relationship between governors, inter-ethnic solidarity and rivalry, and political partisan relationships that span the state boundaries) (Suberu, 2001).

Digital Political Economy

Digital political economy is the study of the reconfiguration of the structures of economic production, political power and social organisation through the use of digital technologies such as AI, internet, mobile communication and data systems (Mansell, 2017). In the Nigerian federal context, digital political economy can be used to understand how differential access to and control of digital technologies, such as AI systems, reproduces, modifies or transforms the existing patterns of power asymmetry between the states (Asongu and Nwachukwu, 2016). It highlights the political economy of infrastructure, the control over telecommunications networks, data centres and platform ecosystems, and shows how it affects whether or not states are able to deploy AI effectively, or are instead stuck with systems controlled at a central point.

Technological Governance

Technological governance is the way a society organizes itself as a set of laws, rules, standards, norms and practices to manage the development, deployment and effects of new technologies (Jasanoff, 2016). In federal states, technological governance raises issues of who should regulate federal and state levels, how access should be equitably structured to technology-based public goods and how the social and political risks of new technologies are identified and addressed. Traditionally, the governance of digital technologies, such as AI, in Nigeria has been weak, under-resourced, and federal-centred with poor understanding of interstate equity issues (Ndemo and Weiss, 2017).

Theoretical Framework

Theoretically this article is based on four complementary frameworks. First, technological determinism and sociological approaches to technology (Winner, 1980; Bijker et al., 1987) problematise the question of how AI is transforming social and political relations as an unavoidable technological force, but rather as a contingent process that is driven by social decisions, power relations and institutional structures. Second, fiscal federalism theory (Oates, 1972; Suberu, 2001) gives the institutional prism through which to look at the impact of AI on states' revenue generation, public goods provision, and federal resources competition. Third, drawing on digital political economy (Mansell, 2017; Asongu and Nwachukwu, 2016), the diffusion of AI is understood in relation to the structures of capitalist technology development and political economy of the Nigerian state. Historical institutionalism (Hall and Taylor, 1996; Pierson, 2004), fourth, helps to account for why the impact of AI on interstate relations is shaped by the path-dependent institutional legacies colonial administrative structure, military-era centralisation and oil-rent distribution politics that provide the context of new technology uptake and governance.

Colonial Foundations of Technological Inequality

The socio-technological basis of the present-day interstates' inequality in Nigeria was established during the colonial era. British colonial government built railways, telegraphs, roads, etc. nottofoster local technological innovation or equal regional distribution but to aid the extraction of agricultural products and eventually, petroleum. (Lugard, 1922; Falola and Heaton, 2008). The railway was conceived as the greatest technological infrastructure of the colonial era and was meant to link agricultural surplus areas, such as Kano for groundnuts, Lagos for cocoa and Port Harcourt for palm oil to the coastal export points but not to promote the integration of the Nigerian interior or link emerging urban centres both North and South of the equator.

The telegraph and later Internet telephone was first introduced in the commercial and administrative centres of the colonial southern region (Lagos, Ibadan, Enugu, Port Harcourt) and eventually used in the administrative capitals of the northern region. This infrastructural advantage would result in differential access to commercial information, administrative connectivity and later on, education and economic opportunities that would be replicated in each wave of technological diffusion (Olatokun & Nwonne, 2012). The colonial practice of technology deployment as means of extraction and not development, set a precedent that technology is serving the interest of a controlling centre and not equitable inter-regional development, which has been difficult to change in post-colonial Nigerian technology policy. Independence, State Formation and the Early Technology Governance Architecture (1960-1985)

The attainment of independence in 1960 and the later evolution of 36 states from the three original regions has resulted in a federal set up with diverse technological endowment, administrative capability and developmental potential of the various states. The regional development plans of the First Republic made some superficial investments in regional technology infrastructure, but were mainly focused on agricultural and industrial development and not on information technology (Post and Vickers, 1973). The first significant federal technology institutions were the National Office for Technology Acquisition and Promotion (NOTAP), which was created in 1979, and the Federal Institute of Industrial Research (FIIRO), all of which worked mainly at the federal level, and had little impact on interstate technological equity (Osaghae, 2011).

The implementation of computer technology in government administration in Nigeria during the 1970s, mainly due to the requirements of the oil boom, was very centralised, focused in the federal institutions and in the large state governments in the South, and basically for the management of payrolls and accounting for revenues and not for development needs. The first, systematic, attempt to create a base for national technology capacity was the introduction of computer science curricula in the early 1980s in the country's universities and the establishment of computer departments in the country's federal universities, but again, the distribution of federal universities and therefore of technology education was based on political rather than developmental considerations, leading to regional imbalances in technology education that continue to the present (Ndemo and Weiss, 2017).

Communications Revolution and the Digital Divide (1985-2010)

The most significant technology governance decision in Nigerian interstate relations history before the AI era was the liberalisation of Nigeria's telecommunications sector that took place in 2001 after the transition to civilian rule in 1999. Since the digital mobile licences were issued to MTN, Econet (now Airtel) and Globacom, the Nigerian mobile telecommunications sector has experienced a surge in investments that have led to the communicative landscape of Nigeria changing in less than 15 years with the country having over 90 million mobile telecommunications subscribers by 2012 (Nigerian Communications Commission, 2013). But the geography of this telecommunications revolution was highly skewed: mobile base stations, internet exchange points, submarine cable landing stations and data centres were mainly located in Lagos, Abuja and the South-South, with the North-East and North-West having a share of less than a quarter of private investment flowing to the more commercially appealing southern markets (Asongu and Nwachukwu, 2016).

This telecom geography has resulted in the first cut of the digital divide in Nigeria which underlies the differential capacity of the states to adopt and harness AI technologies. High mobile penetration, robust fibre-optic backbone networks, and significant internet usage populations, as evidenced by Lagos, Ogun, Rivers, and Delta, created large digital data sets, led to digital literacy in the population and ultimately to large technology companies that would play key roles in the next phase of the AI transition. Other states with low connectivity, limited digital data and weak technology ecosystems did not come into the age of AI with the necessary digital infrastructure to support the effective functioning of AI systems (Van Dijk, 2020; Olatokun and Nwonne, 2012). The Boko Haram insurgency from 2009 onwards which methodically targeted telecommunications infrastructure in the North-East, further exacerbated this divide, making it extremely difficult to correct.

The National Broadband Plan and the early AI Policy (2010-2020)

The most obvious effort to tackle the geographic digital divide in public policy was the National Broadband Plan of 2013-2018, which was later replaced by the National Broadband Plan 2020-2025, by the Nigerian federal government. The plans included targets for the penetration of broadband in all the states, right-of-way harmonisation for the deployment of fibre and designated the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) as the main Federal technology governance body (NITDA, 2019). Nigeria has recently taken its first steps towards engaging with AI governance at the national level through the introduction of the Nigeria AI Policy Advisory Council (NITDA, 2021), as part of the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS) 2020 which incorporated an AI framework.

AI's direct influence on the ability of states to generate internally generated revenue (IGR) is one of the most direct ways it can impact interstate relations in Nigeria, especially as this is a key determinant of state autonomy and developmental capacity. Countries with introduced AI-powered revenue management systems, such as machine learning-based tax compliance forecasting, automated vehicle registration for transport levies collection, facial recognition property identification for land use charge collection and predictive analytics in revenue leakage detection, have made a tremendous jump in IGR that builds on their developmental gains (Asongu, 2017).

Lagos State has implemented the most advanced application using AI empowered tools in the Lagos Internal Revenue Service (LIRS). The implementation of machine learning algorithms in LIRS's taxpayer segmentation and audit targeting mechanisms, coupled with the automated bank levy enforcement and digital collection of stamp duty, helped to provide the necessary push to Lagos State's IGR, which went over 1.5 trillion naira in 2022, surpassing the IGR of 20 states combined (LIRS, 2023). This AI advantage to IGR further widens the fiscal gap between Lagos and less technologically advanced states, allowing for more investment in technology infrastructure in Lagos, while less technologically advanced states are stuck in low revenue, low investment equilibria. This interstate fiscal asymmetry is already quite pronounced, and is further exacerbated by different rates of AI uptake in revenue administration, thereby being structurally exacerbated by AI.

AI is also being used in interstate natural resource competition especially in the Niger Delta states as it relates to the management of oil and gas resources. An AI-driven Remote sensing and Satellite image analysis that is used by federal agencies and oil companies to monitor pipeline infrastructure, detect illegal bunkering and artisanal refining, assess environmental damage from oil spills. The applications are relevant to the negotiations of remediation obligations between the federal and state governments, and the oil companies, as well as to interstate boundary disputes involving onshore and offshore oil-producing areas and for measurement of production eligible for derivation (Watts, 2004; NBS, 2022).

AI, Agricultural Productivity, and Food Security Interstate Dynamics

Agriculture is still the main economic activity in most of the northern states of Nigeria and AI is now starting to show an impact on the productivity of farming with applications such as satellite-based monitoring and management of crops, AI irrigation management, computer vision for crop disease diagnosis, and AI tools for farming advisory systems having interstate implications. The use of AI-based farming tools by Kebbi State government, via the Rice Farmers Association, and the digital monitoring tool in the Anchor Borrowers Programmatic framework in some North-West states, are early instances of AI in the agricultural management of northern states (Aker and Mbiti, 2010).

Yet the potential of AI to transform agriculture in northern states is hampered by the same set of underlying "digital divides" that is preventing smallholder farmers from accessing AI tools: a lack of internet connectivity to access AI tools; a lack of data infrastructure to train regionally relevant machine learning models; and a lack of human capacity to operate AI systems and institutional capacity to procure and manage AI technology contracts without elite capture. AI diffusion could potentially either reduce or escalate interstate insecurity over food supply and demand, therefore, depending on the equity of AI adoption patterns (FAO, 2019).

AI in Counter-Insurgency and Interstate Security Cooperation

One of the most significant points of AI technologies in interstate relations in Nigeria is its use in tackling the various security threats faced by the country, ranging from the Boko Haram insurgency, farmer-herder conflicts, Niger Delta militancy, banditry in the North-West, to separatist agitation in the South-East. Security is interstate: The insurgent groups, the criminal networks and the actors of communal conflicts in Nigeria do not respect the state boundaries and effective security responses necessitate intelligence sharing, operational coordination and

joint deployment of security forces between federal security agencies and state governments (Zenn, 2014; Okeke, 2014).

New forms of interstate security asymmetry are the result of the Federal government's use of AI-powered surveillance structures for counter-insurgency operations, such as the analysis of satellite imagery to detect Boko Haram camps, social media monitoring systems to anticipate conflict escalation, and predictive policing tools in the command centres of the Nigeria Police Force. The states in the North-East and North-West (NE/NW) regions which suffered from the conflict are the biggest users of federal AI security, but lack the capacity to procure, operate or audit their own, thus relying on federal security infrastructure that limits their political autonomy and opens them up to federal surveillance of state-level political opposition (Dafoe, 2018; Gwagwa et al., 2019).

Lake Chad Basin Commission is looking into the use of AI to support early warning systems for cross-border conflict monitoring, which would be a good example of a multi-state/multinational use of AI to a security challenge impacting Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states in northeastern Nigeria as well as neighboring states (LCBC, 2021). This type of use will necessitate cross state data sharing, interoperable technical systems and trust-building between historically mistrustful state actors—all possible but politically challenging conditions that could be achieved through appropriate institutional structures. Cooperative AI governance in the Nigerian interstate context is highlighted by the potential of AI in cross-border conflict early warning, demonstrating both its possibilities and the political challenges.

AI in Electoral Administration and Manipulation

In Nigeria's federal democracy, elections are the main battleground on which the formal game of interstate political competition is played and AI technologies are altering the instruments at their disposal for both conducting the game and influencing the outcome. In administration, INEC's use of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) for the 2023 general elections a mix of fingerprint and facial recognition to verify voters was an important AI-supported improvement in electoral administration that was a direct response to the historical context of voter impersonation and ballot stuffing that have negatively affected the integrity of Nigerian elections since the First Republic (INEC, 2023; Jega, 2012).

The INEC Result Viewing Portal (IReV) designed to allow the real-time electronic transmission and display of results of the polling units, and the BVAS authentication system, have changed the politics of electoral manipulation that impacts on interstate electoral competition. AI-powered transparency tools limited the ability of states with a long tradition of 'result management' where the sitting governor or patron could significantly influence the outcome of the elections by manipulating the results to deliver politically desirable results. There are important interstate consequences too: states whose political elites have used electoral manipulation to hold on to power are entering a new era in which it's harder and less effective to manipulate elections.

On the manipulation end, AI-generated disinformation such as deep fake videos, AI-generated sound-alikes and automated social media propagation of fake narratives proved to be a notable part of the 2023 Nigerian elections. AI-generated content focusing on specific

interstate ethnic and religious sensitivity issues were disseminated via WhatsApp and other platforms to further aggravate inter-communal tensions and electoral violence in various states (Ojoma, 2023). AI disinformation, combined with Nigeria's already existing ethno-religious political mobilisation is a very dangerous mix for interstate relations; AI tools can be used to produce and proliferate content specifically to stir up intergroup hostility at the interstate level.

AI, Financial Technology, and Interstate Economic Integration

The fintech space is the continent's most invested in and the fastest adopted in Nigeria and is the space most transformed by AI in the last decade. AI in financial services mobile money services, AI-powered credit scoring, automated lending, and digital payment solutions has significantly reduced the transaction costs of interstate economic activity, allowing traders, consumers and businesses to transact across states without the need to touch cash or pay for a costly formal banking intermediary (Aker and Mbiti, 2010). The eNaira digital currency initiative by Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and subsequent regulations for payment systems providers, introduced in 2021, were an effort to tap into AI financial infrastructure to foster economic integration at the national level, state boundaries.

But the agglomeration of fintech firms, data infrastructure, and financial AI talent in Lagos fosters a hub-and-spoke interstate economic geography, with Lagos-based platforms intermediating economic transactions for the nation, and with data value and platform rents going largely to the tax base and shareholder community in Lagos, not the states whose economic transactions are being intermediated (Mansell, 2017). This has interstate equity and fiscal implications, similar to, but different from, the historical Lagos vs north dependency of agriculture states on port facilities and commodity trading system and have not been sufficiently taken care of in the federal policy of Nigeria.

AI in Education and Interstate Human Capital Formation

The use of AI in education technologies such as adaptive learning systems, automated essay scoring, intelligent tutoring systems and AI-based student performance prediction in the education systems of the States in Nigeria is a new aspect of the impact of AI on interstate human capital inequality. As technology progresses, states with greater access to digital tools and infrastructure, and more progressive education governance, including Lagos, which has poured financial resources into EdTech platforms via the Lagos State Education District and Eko-Excel program, are poised to provide quality education at scale via AI tools and services, creating a significant human capital divide between more technologically advanced and educationally disadvantaged states (UNESCO, 2021).

The examination administration tools of the national examination bodies (WAEC, NECO, and JAMB) have been upgraded incrementally over the years by using AI tools such as computer-based testing, AI-based item analysis for the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME), and so on. The applications have interstate equity implications to the extent that students in states with less advanced digital infrastructure are at a disadvantage for computer-based exams when compared to students in states with more advanced digital infrastructure. This performance gap between examinations conducted in the north and south, which has been documented across the UTME exams resulting from the differences in the quality of

education or familiarity with digital examination environments will likely widen with greater integration of AI in national examinations, unless there are targeted equity measures implemented (NBS, 2022; UNESCO, 2021).

AI Governance Challenges in the Nigerian Interstate Context

Regulatory Fragmentation and Jurisdictional Conflicts

The regulatory landscape of AI in Nigeria is highly fragmented with multiple federal agencies including the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), the National Data Protection Bureau (NDPB), the Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (FCCPC) and sector-specific regulators such as those in health, financial services and security having overlapping competencies in regulating AI, leading to a complicated and often contradictory governance structure that imposes high compliance costs for AI developers and opens up opportunities for regulatory arbitrage (NITDA, 2021; Gwagwa et al., 2019). Currently, state governments have almost no formal role in the regulation of AI, despite being important actors in the deployment of AI via their education, health, revenue collection and security portfolios.

Such a regulatory framework results in a fundamental mismatch between the centralised nature of federal regulation of AI and the decentralised nature of interstate deployment and impact of AI. For state governments seeking to use AI tools for revenue collection or to deliver social services, they must contend with federal regulations geared more towards the tech industry than to government technology adoption. An effective barrier to AI adoption for states that do not have the legal and technical capacity to deal with this complexity is the increased burden of such legal and technical complexity, especially for states that do not have the resources to adopt AI in the first place (Jasanoff, 2016).

AI, Interstate Equity, and the Reproduction of Historical Inequalities

The biggest lesson AI could teach Nigeria in the field of interstate relations is how it reproduces and further entrenches the historical trends of interregional inequalities, which have been a key feature of the Nigerian political economy since Independence. The analysis in the preceding sections has consistently shown that the adoption of AI technologies is not consistent across all states of Nigeria, with technologically advanced states (mainly in the South) benefiting from the use of AI technologies for competitive advantages in revenue generation, service delivery, security management and electoral administration, while technologically marginalised states (mainly in the North and in conflict affected zones) face costs of adopting AI technologies (displacement of traditional occupation, algorithmic exclusion from financial services, AI-enabled surveillance), without commensurate benefits.

This is the same trend of unequal AI uptake as has been experienced in Nigeria about inter-regional inequality by Williamson (1965), Pike et al. (2017) and recently by Osaghae (2011) and Suberu (2001). The state least capable of adopting AI technologies and most susceptible to AI-enabled competitive disadvantage are the states with the worst human development outcomes the North-West states of Sokoto, Zamfara, Kebbi and Katsina and the North-East states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa as documented in the NBS (2022) Multidimensional Poverty Index. The AI transition risks being a force of divergence and not convergence in

interstate development in Nigeria if there are no deliberate investments in AI infrastructure, capacity development for AI, and governance of technology.

This article uses a historical institutionalist lens to argue that this was not inevitable, but a result of strategic policy decisions the location of ICT investments, the lack of the telecommunications infrastructure in the northern states considered to be in conflict, the regulatory design of AI around the tech sector and not interstate equity that could and should be different. The colonial model of technology deployment as extraction and not equity is not destiny, but is a choice that contemporary Nigerian policy makers can and must change (Hall and Taylor, 1996; Sen, 1999).

Policy Recommendations for Equitable AI Governance in the Nigerian Interstate Context

The following recommendations are advanced for Nigerian federal and state policymakers, technology regulators, civil society organisations and international development partners to ensure that the development of AI technology is one that promotes, rather than undermines, equities and national cohesion between the various states.

First, a National AI Infrastructure Equity Fund should be created which should be funded by a dedicated percentage of the Federation Account to invest in creating AI-enabled infrastructure broadband connectivity, data centres, power supply and edge computing facilities in the technologically less developed states. This fund should be similar to the Universal Service Provision Fund (USPF) which is managed by the NCC but it should be significantly larger and for AI-readiness infrastructure, rather than just for basic connectivity (NCC, 2022).

Second, there should be an Interstate AI Governance Compact, negotiated between all 36 states and the FCT with the assistance of NITDA and the National Economic Council, which sets out common principles for the use of AI in government services, common principles for data sharing across states in the use of AI, and minimum standards for transparency and accountability of government AI systems. Such a compact would offer a structure for the interstate AI cooperation needed for security, health and agriculture issues, and maintain the data sovereignty of individual states (Jasanoff, 2016; World Bank, 2017).

Third, some deliberate Federal human capital development programs should be built around interstate equity, by focusing on scholarship programs, technical training institutions and AI research centres in technologically less endowed states, instead of focusing it in Lagos and Abuja. The existing Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) could be revamped to feature an AI skills development cluster with clearly defined interstate equity goals (UNESCO, 2021; Ndemo and Weiss, 2017).

Fourth, the Nigeria Data Protection Bureau should come up with an interstate data governance framework that clearly outlines the rights of the state government data generated within their localities, provide a mechanism for interstate data sharing for public good AI applications and provide a mechanism for the state government to participate in national AI policy development and regulation (NDPB, 2023; Gwagwa et al., 2019).

Finally, AI disinformation poses unique problems for electoral integrity and the solution is multi-layered, from the federal level to the states. The electoral administration infrastructure (INEC, 2023; Ojoma, 2023) should have the capacity to monitor AI-generated disinformation during election cycles, and a framework for monitoring and responding to such should be established before future election cycles, and both INEC, NCC, and NITDA should be involved in the monitoring process.

Sixth, there is a need to actively promote civil society and academic research on the interstate equity impacts of AI deployment through federal funding for research and international collaboration. Evidence regarding the state of AI governance policy in Nigeria, such as its interstate equity impacts, is still very limited, and there is need for much more empirical work to inform policy-making on the ground on the extent to which AI is being adopted across states and what the equity implication is (Mutanga and Abebe, 2020; Asongu and Nwachukwu, 2016).

Conclusion

This article has explored the impact of Artificial Intelligence on the interstate relations of Nigeria from a historical standpoint, and revealed the colonial and post-colonial trajectory of technology that paved the way for the current uptake of Artificial Intelligence in Nigeria's 36 States. The analysis shows a consistent and worrisome trend; AI technologies are coming to Nigeria in ways that exacerbate and reinforce existing trends of interstate inequality. Geopolitically southern regions and those with greater educational attainment, more revenues, and more capable governance institutions are more likely to have strong digital infrastructure, which enables them to use AI to gain competitive edge in generating revenues, delivering services, keeping people secure, and efficient elections something that those less technologically endowed peers simply can't match.

This article's historical approach shows that this is not something that has to be so or that is natural. It is a result of some highly particular historical decisions: for example, the geographical distribution of technology investment in Lagos, the federal design of AI governance that is oblivious to interstate equity, or the telecoms liberalisation geography of the 2000s, or the military era policies of centralisation, or the colonial infrastructure policies. Historical institutionalist perspective is most important for analysing Nigeria's AI divide because it is a product of historical choices which can be reversed through purposeful policy interventions (Pierson, 2004; Hall and Taylor, 1996).

There's a lot at risk. The very survival of Nigeria as one nation has always relied on some minimal awareness on the part of all citizens no matter their state or region that they will have access to opportunities and protections that the national community can provide as a result of their membership in the Nigerian federation. AI transition that will systematically benefit already advantaged states and further consolidate the developmental exclusion of marginalised states will further undermine the tenuous tentacles of Nigerian federalism and accentuate the political tension for restructuring, resource control and in extreme measure, for separation that have been a recurring phenomenon in the country's political history (Osaghae, 2011; Suberu, 2001). Making sure AI is not a force for interstate divergence but rather

convergence is thus no longer a mere technology policy question but a question of national survival.

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