ACEMOGLU ON AI, DEMOCRACY & LIBERTY

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AI & THREATS TO DEMOCRACY

Acemoglu argues AI is ACCENTUATING existing 'bad' political in democracies

1. POLARISATION IN LEGISLATURES

2. POLARISATION ONLINE

3. MONEY IN POLITICS

Example of Cambridge Analytica

SOME THOUGHTS

- All these are absolutely true within the American context. But more widely?

- Polarization in legislatures largely depends on electoral rules - if economy's divisions become wider (knowledge economy vs 'left behinds') this will translate very differently across countries.

- Social media may be especially pronounced in English-speaking countries because of 'global language of Twitter'. Elsewhere, it does seem to have bolstered populist movements because of OLDER people online.

- Money in politics also matters differently because of varied susceptibility of elections to campaign finance.

AI & THREATS TO DEMOCRACY 2

AI also prevents threats to countries BECOMING democracies by improving ability of autocratic governments to monitor and control citizens.

1. Facial Recognition

2. Mass surveillance and censorship of social media

3. AI military technologies

SOME THOUGHTS

- Important recent paper on 'AI-tocracy' (NBER 29466, Beraja et al) shows symbiotic relationship between CCP and facial recognition software (FRS) companies.

- Unrest -> govt procurement of FRS -> FRS firms higher innovation rates -> improved crushing of dissent. Protests as training sets.

- Lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS) increasingly being purchased by wealthy autocracies. Hard to track or control internationally.

- Implication - AI accentuates ability of WEALTHY autocracies to survive - could break link between growing wealth and higher Pr. of democratisation.

AI & BENEFITS TO DEMOCRACY

- AI could revolutionise education by providing personalised training

- AI can create new 'good jobs' in health, entertainment, and manufacturing

- AI could ENHANCE privacy and liberty through improved cryptography

SOME THOUGHTS

- AI could potentially enhance process of democracy by facilitating 'voting on everything'

- Netflix but for politics. You liked this law, maybe you'll like this one.

- Voting avatars

- Fundamental problem of Arrow's Impossibility Theorem

ACEMOGLU'S SOLUTIONS

- Government Investment to make sure AI is targeted to the production of 'good jobs'. Change in fiscal policy to equalise taxation of labor and AI-capital (e.g. South Korean shift in tax policy)

- Norms: need AI researchers to develop 'moral sense' of implications of AI.

- Democratic governance: need mass response to violations of AI norms - e.g. 'social action' against companies selling facial recognition software.

SOME THOUGHTS

- Oh, just that?

- On government investment - who is political coalition for this? Investment policies have long-run payoff and short-term costs. And are targeted at young who are politically weak. Moral of Dominic Cummings

- On social norms. Yes, that would be great. What is the lever? Do these develop 'naturally'? Can government get there? COVID social distancing might be best recent example.

- Governance - surely cannot be 'social action' alone - needs international cooperation. Runs up against our new multipolar world with ambitious autocracies.