

Implications of AI-Driven Surveillance on Media Freedom and National Security in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: This paper examines the implications of AI-driven surveillance on media freedom and national security in Nigeria. As the country increasingly adopts advanced technologies to address security challenges, concerns arise about potential infringements on civil liberties, particularly press freedom. The study employs a comparative case study approach, analyzing AI surveillance implementation in China, the United Kingdom, and Estonia to derive insights applicable to the Nigerian context. The research reveals that without adequate legal frameworks and oversight, AI surveillance can significantly undermine media freedom and lead to journalistic self-censorship. Even in democratic societies, tensions emerge between security objectives and press freedoms. However, transparent approaches to AI implementation, coupled with strong data protection laws and public engagement, can help maintain trust and safeguard civil liberties while addressing security concerns. The paper recommends that Nigeria prioritize developing comprehensive legal frameworks to protect press freedoms and individual privacy while implementing AI-driven surveillance. It suggests adopting elements of Estonia's transparent approach to digital governance while being mindful of risks illustrated by the Chinese and UK cases. Engaging in open dialogue with media organizations, civil society groups, and technology experts is crucial for developing balanced policies. Furthermore, the study proposes that Nigerian media organizations and journalist associations develop enhanced source protection protocols to counter AI surveillance capabilities. It also recommends implementing a standardized AI Impact Assessment Framework across newsrooms to regularly evaluate how surveillance technologies influence editorial decisions. These measures aim to strike a balance between enhancing national security and preserving media freedom in the age of AI-driven surveillance.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) and its integration into surveillance systems has sparked a global debate on the balance between national security and civil liberties, particularly media freedom. This discourse is especially relevant in Nigeria, where the government has increasingly adopted digital technologies to address security challenges while navigating complex media landscapes.

Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, has faced significant security threats in recent years, including terrorism, insurgency, and cybercrime. In response, the government has intensified efforts to leverage technology for national security purposes. The National Security Strategy of 2019 explicitly mentions the use of "technology and innovation" to enhance Nigeria's security capabilities (Office of the National Security Adviser, 2019). This push towards technological solutions has coincided with the global trend of AI-driven surveillance systems becoming more sophisticated and widespread.

However, the implementation of these technologies has raised concerns about potential infringements on civil liberties, particularly freedom of expression and press freedom. Nigeria has a vibrant media sector that has played a crucial role in its democratic development since the end of military rule in 1999 (Ojebode, 2018). The country's constitution guarantees freedom of expression and of the press, but in practice, journalists often face challenges and restrictions (Freedom House, 2023).

The intersection of AI-driven surveillance and media freedom in Nigeria is complex and multifaceted. On one hand, the government argues that advanced surveillance technologies are necessary to combat serious security threats. The Terrorism (Prevention) Act of 2011 and its 2013 amendment provide legal backing for surveillance activities in counterterrorism efforts (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). On the other hand, there are concerns that these technologies could be misused to monitor and suppress journalistic activities.

A report by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) highlighted instances where Nigerian journalists have been targeted using digital surveillance tools, leading to arrests and intimidation (CPJ, 2020). This raises questions about the potential chilling effect on press freedom and investigative journalism, which are crucial for holding power to account in a democracy.

The legal framework governing AI and surveillance in Nigeria is still evolving. The Nigeria Data Protection Regulation (NDPR) of 2019 provides some safeguards for personal data but does not specifically address the challenges posed by AI-driven surveillance

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(National Information Technology Development Agency, 2019). This regulatory gap has led to calls for more comprehensive legislation to ensure that the deployment of these technologies is subject to robust oversight and aligns with international human rights standards.

International organizations have also weighed in on this issue. A report by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression emphasized the need for countries to ensure that surveillance technologies do not infringe on media freedom and other fundamental rights (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2019).

The implications of AI-driven surveillance on media freedom and national security in Nigeria represent a critical area for research and policy development. As the country continues to navigate the complexities of digital governance, there is a pressing need for interdisciplinary studies that examine the technical, legal, ethical, and societal dimensions of these technologies. It is upon this background that this paper seeks to examine the implications of AI-driven surveillance on media freedom and national security in Nigeria

Statement of the Problem

The rapid adoption of AI-driven surveillance technologies in Nigeria has created a complex interplay between national security interests and media freedom, necessitating a critical examination of their implications. While these technologies offer powerful tools for addressing security challenges, they also pose significant risks to civil liberties, particularly freedom of the press (Freedom House, 2023).

The Nigerian government has increasingly deployed advanced surveillance systems to combat threats such as terrorism and cybercrime, as outlined in the National Security Strategy (Office of the National Security Adviser, 2019). However, the legal framework governing these technologies remains inadequate, with existing legislation like the Nigeria Data Protection Regulation (2019) failing to address the specific challenges posed by AI-driven surveillance (National Information Technology Development Agency, 2019).

Concurrently, there are growing concerns about the potential misuse of these technologies to monitor and suppress journalistic activities. The Committee to Protect Journalists (2020) has documented instances of digital surveillance tools being used against Nigerian journalists, raising alarm about the chilling effect on press freedom and investigative reporting.

The lack of comprehensive research on the specific impacts of AI-driven surveillance on media freedom in Nigeria. While studies have examined broader issues of digital rights and press freedom, there is a dearth of focused analysis on how AI surveillance technologies are affecting journalistic practices and media independence in the Nigerian context.

The absence of a framework for balancing national security interests with media freedom in the age of AI surveillance. Current discourse often treats these as competing interests, but there is a need for a nuanced approach that explores potential synergies and safeguards.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This paper seeks to achieve the following objectives;

- i. To examine the effects of AI-driven surveillance technologies on source protection practices among Nigerian journalists.
- ii. To assess the impact of AI-driven surveillance on editorial decision-making processes in Nigerian media organizations.

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

AI- Driven Surveillance

AI-driven surveillance represents a significant evolution in monitoring and data collection technologies, leveraging artificial intelligence to enhance the capabilities and reach of traditional surveillance methods. To fully grasp this concept, it's essential to break it down into its constituent parts and examine how they synergize in modern surveillance systems. At its core, artificial intelligence refers to computer systems capable of performing tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making, and language translation (Russell & Norvig, 2020). When applied to surveillance, AI transforms passive data collection into active, intelligent monitoring and analysis.

AI-driven surveillance systems typically incorporate machine learning algorithms, which enable them to improve their performance over time without explicit programming. These systems can analyze vast amounts of data from various sources, including cameras, sensors, social media, and communication networks, to detect patterns, anomalies, and potential threats (Hao, 2019).

One of the key components of AI-driven surveillance is computer vision, which allows systems to interpret and understand visual information from the world. This technology powers facial recognition systems, which have become increasingly prevalent in public spaces and border control. For instance, China's extensive use of facial recognition for public surveillance has garnered significant attention and debate (Mozur, 2018).

Natural language processing (NLP) is another critical element of AI-driven surveillance, enabling the analysis of text and speech data. This technology allows for the monitoring of communications, social media posts, and other textual data sources for potential security threats or discussions of interest (Zuboff, 2019).

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Predictive analytics is a powerful aspect of AI-driven surveillance, using historical data and machine learning models to forecast future events or behaviors. In the context of law enforcement, predictive policing algorithms attempt to anticipate crime patterns and allocate resources accordingly, though these systems have faced criticism for potential bias and reinforcement of discriminatory practices (Richardson et al., 2019).

The integration of Internet of Things (IoT) devices with AI-driven surveillance systems has expanded the scope and granularity of data collection. Smart city initiatives often incorporate networked sensors and cameras that feed data into AI systems for analysis, ostensibly to improve urban management and public safety (Kitchin, 2019).

While proponents argue that AI-driven surveillance enhances public safety and national security, critics raise concerns about privacy infringement, potential abuse, and the erosion of civil liberties. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has warned that AI-driven surveillance technologies can be used to "infringe on human rights and fundamental freedoms" (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2022).

In the context of media freedom, AI-driven surveillance presents particular challenges. Journalists and their sources may be at risk of identification and tracking through these technologies, potentially compromising confidentiality and press freedom. The ability of AI systems to analyze vast amounts of data could also be used to monitor and suppress dissenting voices or investigative reporting (Reporters Without Borders, 2021).

It's important to note that the capabilities and applications of AI-driven surveillance are rapidly evolving, often outpacing regulatory frameworks and ethical guidelines. As such, the definition and understanding of this concept continue to develop alongside technological advancements and societal debates on its implications.

Media Freedom

Media freedom is a fundamental principle in democratic societies, encompassing the right of media organizations and journalists to operate independently, without undue interference or control from governments, corporations, or other powerful entities. This concept is inextricably linked to broader notions of freedom of expression and access to information, which are enshrined in international human rights declarations and many national constitutions (United Nations, 1948).

At its core, media freedom involves the ability of journalists and media outlets to investigate, report, and disseminate information and opinions without fear of reprisal, censorship, or legal sanctions. This includes the right to criticize governments, expose corruption, and present diverse viewpoints on matters of public interest (Reporters Without Borders, 2023).

The concept of media freedom extends beyond the mere absence of direct censorship. It encompasses a range of factors that enable a vibrant and independent media ecosystem. These include legal protections for journalists, access to information laws, diverse ownership of media outlets, and the economic viability of independent journalism (Freedom House, 2023).

A key aspect of media freedom is source protection, also known as reporter's privilege. This principle allows journalists to maintain the confidentiality of their sources, which is crucial for investigative reporting and whistleblowing. Many countries have laws that recognize this right, although its application can vary significantly (Posetti, 2017).

Media freedom also encompasses digital rights in the modern era. With the rise of online journalism and social media platforms, the concept has expanded to include issues such as internet censorship, digital surveillance, and online harassment of journalists (Article 19, 2022).

The importance of media freedom in democratic societies cannot be overstated. A free press serves as a watchdog, holding those in power accountable and informing citizens about matters of public interest. It facilitates public debate, promotes transparency, and contributes to the overall health of democratic institutions (Schudson, 2020).

However, media freedom faces numerous challenges globally. These include direct threats such as violence against journalists, imprisonment, and censorship, as well as more subtle forms of control like regulatory pressure, economic constraints, and manipulation of advertising markets (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2023).

In many countries, national security concerns are often cited as justification for restricting media freedom. While legitimate security interests can sometimes necessitate certain limitations on information dissemination, there is a growing concern about the misuse of security arguments to suppress legitimate journalism (UN Human Rights Committee, 2011).

The advent of artificial intelligence and advanced surveillance technologies has introduced new complexities to the concept of media freedom. These technologies can be used to monitor journalists, identify sources, and track the spread of information, potentially having a chilling effect on press freedom (Reporters Without Borders, 2022).

Measuring media freedom is a complex task, but several international organizations attempt to do so. The Press Freedom Index by Reporters Without Borders and the Freedom of the Press report by Freedom House are widely recognized assessments that evaluate various aspects of media freedom across countries (Reporters Without Borders, 2023; Freedom House, 2023).

It's important to note that media freedom is not an absolute concept. Even in countries with strong protections for press freedom, there are typically some legal limitations, such as restrictions on defamation, hate speech, or the publication of classified information. The challenge lies in striking a balance between these necessary restrictions and maintaining a robust, independent media (Kaye, 2019).

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National Security

The concept of national security is complex and multifaceted, evolving significantly over time to encompass a broad range of issues beyond traditional military concerns. At its core, national security refers to the ability of a nation to protect its citizens, territory, and interests from internal and external threats, while maintaining its sovereignty and promoting its national values (Romm, 1993). Historically, national security was primarily associated with military power and the protection of territorial integrity. However, the post-Cold War era and the events of the 21st century have dramatically expanded this concept. Today, national security encompasses a wide array of issues including economic stability, cybersecurity, environmental sustainability, public health, and social cohesion (Buzan et al., 1998).

The United Nations Development Programme's 1994 Human Development Report introduced the concept of "human security," which broadened the understanding of national security to include non-military threats to individual well-being. This approach emphasizes freedom from want and freedom from fear, highlighting seven key areas of security: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political security (UNDP, 1994).

In the context of international relations, national security is often framed within the realist paradigm, which posits that states operate in an anarchic international system and must prioritize their own survival and interests (Waltz, 1979). This perspective emphasizes the importance of military capabilities, alliances, and strategic deterrence in maintaining national security.

However, liberal and constructivist approaches to international relations have challenged this narrow view, emphasizing the role of international institutions, economic interdependence, and shared norms in promoting collective security and reducing interstate conflicts (Keohane & Nye, 1977).

The advent of globalization and rapid technological advancements have further complicated the national security landscape. Cybersecurity has emerged as a critical component of national security, with states increasingly concerned about protecting their digital infrastructure from cyber attacks, espionage, and information warfare (Singer & Friedman, 2014).

Climate change is another non-traditional security threat that has gained prominence in national security discourse. The U.S. Department of Defense, for instance, has identified climate change as a "threat multiplier" that can exacerbate existing security challenges and create new ones (U.S. Department of Defense, 2015).

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of public health as a national security concern. The global health crisis has demonstrated how biological threats can disrupt economies, strain healthcare systems, and challenge social stability, prompting many nations to reconsider their approach to biosecurity and pandemic preparedness (Elbe, 2021).

Terrorism and transnational organized crime continue to be significant national security challenges for many countries. These threats often transcend national borders, necessitating international cooperation and intelligence sharing (Byman, 2015).

The concept of national security also intersects with civil liberties and human rights, often creating tension between security measures and individual freedoms. This balance is particularly relevant in discussions of surveillance, privacy rights, and freedom of expression (Posner & Vermeule, 2007).

In many countries, national security is institutionalized through specific government bodies, such as the National Security Council in the United States or the National Security Committee in the United Kingdom. These institutions are responsible for coordinating policy across various government agencies to address a wide range of security challenges (Jordan et al., 2009).

It's important to note that the concept of national security can be subjective and politically charged. What constitutes a threat to national security can vary significantly between countries and can be influenced by political ideologies, historical experiences, and strategic cultures (Katzenstein, 1996).

Empirical Review

A comprehensive study by Feldstein (2019) examined the global spread of AI surveillance, analyzing its adoption across 176 countries. The research revealed that AI surveillance technologies are not limited to authoritarian regimes but are also increasingly used by democracies. Feldstein's work underscores the potential for these technologies to be used for both legitimate security purposes and to suppress dissent, raising concerns about their impact on media freedom and civil liberties.

In the context of media freedom, Lokot (2020) conducted an in-depth analysis of the chilling effects of digital surveillance on journalists in Ukraine. Through interviews with media professionals, the study found that awareness of digital surveillance led to increased self-censorship and changes in communication practices among journalists. This research highlights the tangible impact of surveillance technologies on press freedom and the ability of journalists to protect their sources.

Focusing on the intersection of AI surveillance and national security, Hoadley and Lucas (2018) explored the implications of AI for U.S. national security in a report for the Congressional Research Service. Their analysis covered various applications of AI in military and intelligence contexts, including surveillance. The study emphasized the dual-use nature of AI technologies, noting their potential to enhance security capabilities while also posing risks to privacy and civil liberties if misused.

In a more specific examination of facial recognition technology, a key component of AI-driven surveillance, Fussey and Murray (2019) conducted an independent study on the use of automated facial recognition by the Metropolitan Police in London. Their

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empirical analysis revealed significant inaccuracies and potential biases in the system, raising questions about the reliability and ethical implications of such technologies when used for law enforcement and security purposes.

Addressing the global perspective, Nemitz (2018) examined the challenges posed by AI to democracy, rule of law, and fundamental rights in the European context. The study analyzed the legal and ethical frameworks surrounding AI technologies, including those used for surveillance. Nemitz's work emphasizes the need for robust governance structures to ensure that AI-driven systems, including those used for national security purposes, do not undermine democratic values and media freedom.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper is anchored on the Sousveillance and Critical Security Studies.

Sousveillance and Critical Security Studies offer compelling theoretical frameworks for examining the implications of AI-driven surveillance on media freedom and national security. These theories provide alternative perspectives to traditional approaches, challenging dominant narratives and power structures in the realm of security and surveillance.

Sousveillance, a term coined by Steve Mann, refers to the recording of an activity by a participant in the activity, typically using portable personal technologies (Mann, 2004). It can be understood as "surveillance from below" or "inverse surveillance," where individuals use technology to observe and record those in positions of authority. This concept stands in contrast to surveillance, which typically involves observation from above by those in power.

The theory of sousveillance posits that when individuals have the ability to watch the watchers, it can lead to increased transparency and accountability in power structures (Mann et al., 2003). In the context of media freedom and AI-driven surveillance, sousveillance offers a framework for understanding how journalists and citizens might use technology to counter state or corporate surveillance, potentially safeguarding press freedoms and civil liberties.

One of the key assumptions of sousveillance theory is that the democratization of surveillance technologies can lead to a more balanced power dynamic between the watchers and the watched. This idea is particularly relevant in the age of smartphones and social media, where individuals can easily document and share instances of abuse of power or rights violations (Ganascia, 2010).

Critical Security Studies (CSS), on the other hand, emerged as a critique of traditional security studies in the 1990s. CSS challenges the state-centric and militaristic focus of conventional security approaches, arguing for a broader and deeper understanding of security that encompasses human, societal, and environmental dimensions (Booth, 1991).

A fundamental assumption of CSS is that security is socially constructed rather than objectively given. This means that what constitutes a security threat is not self-evident but is instead the result of political processes and power dynamics (Krause & Williams, 1996). In the context of AI-driven surveillance, CSS would encourage questioning who defines security threats and whose interests are served by particular security measures.

CSS also emphasizes the importance of considering the security of individuals and communities, not just states. This "human security" approach aligns with concerns about how AI-driven surveillance might impact personal privacy, freedom of expression, and media freedom (Newman, 2010).

Another key aspect of CSS is its critical stance towards the securitization of various issues. Securitization refers to the process by which certain topics are framed as security threats, often justifying extraordinary measures to address them (Buzan et al., 1998). CSS scholars would likely scrutinize how AI-driven surveillance is justified in the name of national security and what implications this has for civil liberties and democratic values.

When applied to the study of AI-driven surveillance and its implications for media freedom and national security, these theoretical frameworks encourage a nuanced analysis that goes beyond traditional security paradigms. They prompt researchers to consider how power dynamics shape the deployment and impact of surveillance technologies, how individuals and communities might resist or subvert these systems, and how the very concepts of security and threat are constructed and contested.

Moreover, these theories suggest that the relationship between surveillance, security, and freedom is not fixed but is instead constantly negotiated through social and political processes. This perspective opens up possibilities for reimagining security practices in ways that better protect media freedom and other fundamental rights while still addressing legitimate security concerns.

METHODOLOGY

The paper employed a comparative case study approach, analyzing AI surveillance implementation in various countries. This method allows for a nuanced understanding of how different contexts and implementations of AI surveillance technologies impact media freedom and national security, providing valuable insights that can be applied to the Nigerian context. The research focused on a selection of countries with varying levels of democratic development, technological advancement, and approaches to balancing security concerns with civil liberties. These case studies were chosen to represent a diverse range of experiences, including both positive and negative outcomes of AI surveillance implementation.

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Case Studies

The data analysis for this study on the implications of AI-driven surveillance on media freedom and national security in Nigeria draws insights from case studies of AI surveillance implementation in China, the United Kingdom, and Estonia. These countries represent diverse approaches to balancing security concerns with civil liberties and press freedoms in the context of advanced surveillance technologies.

China's implementation of AI-driven surveillance provides a stark example of how these technologies can be used to exert control over media and citizens. The country's extensive use of facial recognition, social credit systems, and internet monitoring has created what scholars describe as a "surveillance state" (Qiang, 2019). According to a report by Freedom House (2023), China's surveillance infrastructure has had a severe chilling effect on press freedom, with journalists facing increased risks of detection and persecution when reporting on sensitive topics. The case of China illustrates how AI surveillance, when implemented without robust checks and balances, can significantly undermine media freedom and be used as a tool for social control under the guise of national security.

In contrast, the United Kingdom offers insights into the challenges of implementing AI surveillance within a democratic framework. The UK's use of AI-powered CCTV systems and data analytics for law enforcement has raised concerns about privacy and potential abuse. A study by the Ada Lovelace Institute (2022) found that while these technologies have contributed to solving crimes, they have also led to instances of overreach and disproportionate targeting of certain communities. In the context of media freedom, UK journalists have reported increased caution in source protection and communication methods due to awareness of surveillance capabilities (Townend & Danbury, 2021). This case highlights the delicate balance between leveraging AI for legitimate security purposes and safeguarding press freedoms and civil liberties.

Estonia presents a more positive model of AI implementation in governance and security. The country's e-governance system, which incorporates AI technologies, has been praised for its transparency and citizen-centric approach (Kalvet, 2022). Estonia's use of blockchain technology to secure citizen data and its strict regulations on data access have helped to build public trust in digital systems. A report by Reporters Without Borders (2023) noted that Estonia's approach has not significantly impeded press freedoms, with journalists reporting relatively low levels of concern about digital surveillance compared to other European countries. This case study demonstrates how thoughtful implementation of AI technologies, coupled with strong legal protections and transparency measures, can enhance national security without compromising media freedom.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Analyzing these case studies reveals several key findings relevant to Nigeria's context. First, the implementation of AI surveillance without adequate legal frameworks and oversight mechanisms poses significant risks to media freedom and can lead to self-censorship among journalists. Second, even in democratic contexts, the use of AI surveillance technologies can create tensions between national security objectives and press freedoms, necessitating ongoing dialogue and policy adjustments. Finally, transparent approaches to AI implementation, coupled with strong data protection laws and public engagement, can help maintain trust and safeguard civil liberties while addressing security concerns.

These insights suggest that Nigeria, in considering the implementation of AI-driven surveillance, should prioritize the development of comprehensive legal frameworks that protect press freedoms and individual privacy. The country could benefit from adopting elements of Estonia's transparent approach to digital governance while being mindful of the potential risks illustrated by the Chinese and UK cases. Furthermore, engaging in open dialogue with media organizations, civil society groups, and technology experts will be crucial in developing balanced policies that address both security needs and the preservation of media freedom.

CONCLUSION

The study on the implications of AI-driven surveillance on media freedom and national security in Nigeria reveals a complex interplay between technological advancements, security imperatives, and civil liberties. Through the analysis of case studies from China, the United Kingdom, and Estonia, it becomes evident that the implementation of AI surveillance technologies can significantly impact media freedom and the broader landscape of civil rights.

The findings underscore the critical need for Nigeria to approach the adoption of AI-driven surveillance with caution and foresight. As the country seeks to address its security challenges, it must also safeguard the fundamental principles of press freedom and individual privacy that are essential to a vibrant democracy. The study suggests that Nigeria should prioritize the development of robust legal frameworks and oversight mechanisms to govern the use of AI surveillance technologies. These frameworks should be designed to prevent abuse, ensure transparency, and protect journalistic activities from undue interference.

Moreover, the research highlights the importance of fostering public trust through transparent governance and active engagement with media organizations, civil society groups, and technology experts. By learning from the experiences of other nations and adapting best practices to its unique context, Nigeria can strive to strike a balance between enhancing national security and preserving media freedom in the age of AI-driven surveillance.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the paper recommends thus;

- i. Media organizations and journalist associations in Nigeria should develop and implement enhanced source protection protocols. These protocols should be designed to counter the capabilities of AI-driven surveillance technologies.
- ii. To address the objective of assessing the impact of AI-driven surveillance on editorial decision-making processes in Nigerian media organizations, it is recommended that a standardized AI Impact Assessment Framework be developed and implemented across newsrooms. This framework would require media organizations to regularly evaluate how the presence of AI-driven surveillance technologies is influencing their editorial decisions, particularly regarding sensitive or controversial topics.

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