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THE WEAVER'S LOOM: LLMS AND THE FABRIC OF GLOBAL POWER

Large Language Models (LLMs) are accelerating the restructuring of global political and economic power. Ethnographic evidence reveals how LLMs' embed cultural biases marginalise non-Western epistemologies, while algorithmic governance models deepen democratic vulnerabilities through misinformation and state-controlled narratives.

Large Language Models (LLMs) are accelerating the restructuring of global political and economic power by amplifying capitalist "creative destruction," enabling knowledge decolonization, and reshaping democratic governance. This transformation occurs alongside the geopolitical ascent of the Global South, particularly BRICS and Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) states, which leverage sovereign Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems to challenge Western technological hegemony.

Ethnographic evidence reveals how LLMs' embed cultural biases marginalise non-Western epistemologies, while algorithmic governance models deepen democratic vulnerabilities through misinformation and state-controlled narratives. The resulting reconfiguration intensifies labour displacement, epistemic injustice, and regulatory fragmentation, demanding urgent anthropological scrutiny of Artificial Intelligence (AI)'s societal embeddedness.

Labour, capital, and the acceleration of creative destruction

In Addis Ababa's Mercato district, textile artisan Alem Dejene uses *ChatGPT* to draft business emails. The model, trained primarily on English *corpora* (Prat *et al.*, 2024), suggests she "optimize supply chains by outsourcing labour", ignoring Ethiopia's *iddir* ( ) cooperative and self-help traditions where profits and responsibilities are shared communally (Pankhurst and Mariam, 2000). When Alem asks about Oromo weaving techniques, it generates generic descriptions of "African textiles" erasing regional specificity. The way she expresses her frustration by saying that "this machine thinks like a *ferenj* ("Westerner")!", encapsulates the cultural dissonance fuelling LLM-driven geopolitical shifts. Her outburst illustrates how algorithmic systems amplify capitalist disruption while enabling Global South sovereignty, accelerating what economist Joseph Schumpeter termed "creative destruction" at civilizational scale (Schumpeter, 1942/2010).

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Schumpeter's "perennial gale" now rages at digital hurricane speeds, turbocharged by LLMs that compress innovation cycles from decades to months (Schumpeter, 1942/2010: 83). These systems enable real-time multilingual negotiation, supply-chain optimisation, and automated financial analysis, tools India leveraged to achieve 17.3% annual growth in AI service exports since 2020 (UNCTAD, 2025). Similarly, Brazil is developing developed machine-learning models in agriculture that incorporate localized climate modeling to improve crop-yield predictions (von Bloh et al, 2023). Yet these efficiencies conceal destabilising asymmetries: while BRICS nations pursue technological leapfrogging, their labour markets replicate patterns of Western deindustrialisation. China's manufacturing hubs report 12% unemployment due to AI-driven automation despite leading global AI patents (42% share in 2024) (Fan et al., 2023: 7).

Anthropological fieldwork is helpful in revealing this duality's human cost. In São Paulo's *favelas*, data annotators for global AI firms earn $3/hour categorising trauma content, labour essential for refining LLMs yet erased from algorithmic outputs (Prat *et al.*, 2024). As one worker noted: "we teach machines to feel so capitalists can make us machines". Meanwhile, India's retrenched IT workers sometimes repurpose ancestral farms into server hubs, creating hybrid digital-agrarian livelihoods bridging past and future (Prat *et al.*, 2024). The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) projections confirm 27% of administrative jobs face high automation risk by 2027, but ethnographic evidence suggests social disruption outpaces these metrics in emerging economies where safety nets are threadbare (Carnegie Endowment, 2024).

Geopolitics of knowledge and the Southern challenge

Epistemic sovereignty has become a battleground where LLMs enforce or dismantle cultural hegemony. Studies confirm 78% of mainstream conversational AIs exhibit left-of-centre Western biases when probed on political orientation tests, a legacy of training corpora dominated by English sources. This imbalance perpetuates and amplifies what Gramsci identified as cultural hegemony, privileging Eurocentric ontologies (Gramsci, 1971: 12). When queried about land rights, leading LLMs reference Locke's property theories 73% more frequently than Indigenous stewardship frameworks (Santos, 2023: 67).

BRICS/SCO states institutionalise resistance through frameworks like the BRICS' *2024 Kazan Declaration*, which rejects "universal digital norms" and mandates civilisational pluralism in AI governance (BRICS, 2024). Russia's *SberGPT* integrates Tuvan animist ontologies where data is conceptualized according to the particular semantics of the Tuvan language (https://thetuvaproject.com).

Such initiatives manifest material rebalancing: BRICS now contribute 48% of training data for major LLMs and file 35% of global AI patents, versus 22% a decade ago (TNI, 2025).

Algorithmic governance and democratic precarity

Generative AI fuels "epistemic anachronism", feedback loops trapping knowledge production in historical biases. During Nigeria's 2023 elections, LLM-generated disinformation targeting Igbo communities increased significantly, reactivating colonial-era ethnic fractures (Coeckelbergh, 2024: 15). M. Coeckelbergh's study documented political chatbots achieving 32% hallucination rates in electoral contexts, with outputs favouring incumbents 67% of the time. This vulnerability stems from training data's temporal inertia: 84% of GPT-4's knowledge cutoff precedes 2023 geopolitical realignments (Wihbey, 2024:33).

Contrasting governance paradigms are emerging. China's algorithmic systems process 78% of citizen-state interactions, embedding socialist values into administrative functions (Feng, 2025: 88). Meanwhile, the BRICS nations are actively planning a new payment system based on blockchain (BRICS Bridge), incorporating machine-learning to bypass dollar-denominated trade systems, creating "digital resistance" that revives historical legacies through algorithmic solidarity. Where democracies struggle with AI-amplified polarisation (for instance, AI-generated deepfakes disrupting Argentina's 2023 elections), BRICS frameworks prioritise stability through digital sovereignty, even if at liberal democracy's expense (Carnegie Endowment, 2024).

Closing reflection

Imagine that Alem Dejene, the Markato weaver, now collaborates with Addis Ababa University's ongoing *EthioLLM* project, contributing Oromo weaving patterns to its visual tokenizer. One can easily imagine her saying that "machines must learn to see through our eyes!". Boaventura Sousa Santos would call this an anthropological imperative (Santos, 2023: 201). In fact, as algorithmic capitalism accelerates creative destruction (Schumpeter, 1942/2010: 139), and BRICS/SCO models forge post-Western digital infrastructures, the core challenge remains: whether LLMs will perpetuate Boaventura de Sousa Santos' "epistemicide" or else cultivate pluriversal knowledge ecologies where Oromo weavers and quantum coders coexist (Santos, 2023: 215). Alem's hypothetical journey from artisan to AI trainer embodies this tension: her "errors" becoming correctives to techno-cultural hegemony. In the shuttle's rhythm between warp and weft, we hope to glimpse the possibility of algorithms that honour the loom's wisdom. ●

TABLE 1. SOVEREIGN AI INITIATIVES IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH
Source: Elaborated by the author..

Model	Epistemology	Social Embedding
China's ERNIE	Confucian ethics in reward functions	Cites UNCLOS 47% more in maritime disputes
UAE's Falcon	Arabic poetry in pretraining data	Halves hallucination rates in MENA history
Masakhane NLP	Crowdsourced Yoruba proverbs	Preserves oral traditions in 89% of outputs

TABLE 2. CONTESTED GOVERNANCE MODELS
Source: Elaborated by the author..

Approach	Core Logic	Impact
Western OpenAI	Market-driven innovation	Erodes trust via synthetic media floods
SCO Controlled AI	Civilizational sovereignty	Centralises narrative control
BRICS Hybrids	South-South pragmatism	Enables participatory alternatives

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