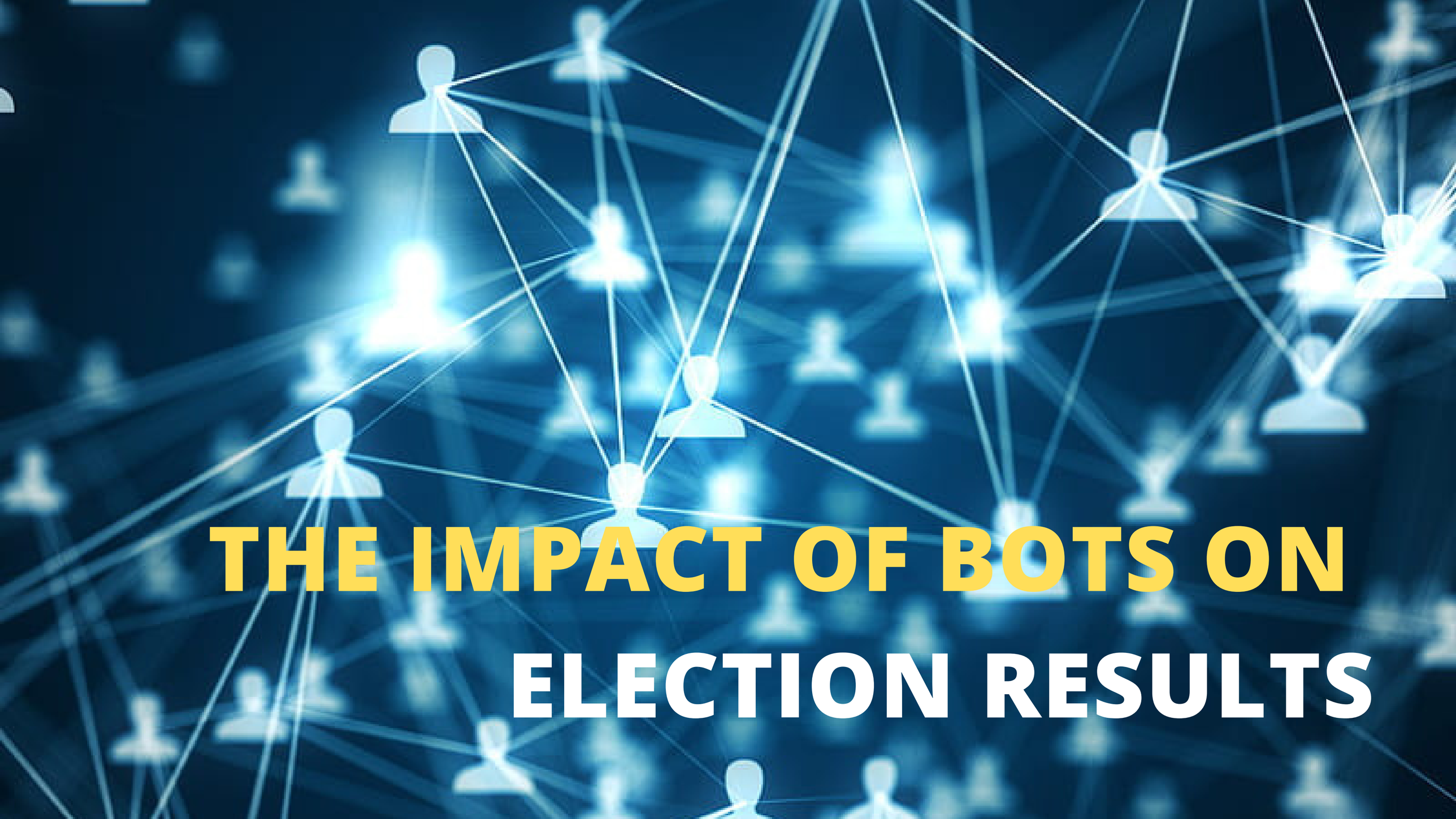
THE IMPACT OF BOTS ON
ELECTION RESULTS

WHAT IS A BOT

Short for robot and also called an internet bot.

A bot is an automated software application that performs repetitive tasks over a network. It follows specific instructions to imitate human behavior but is faster and more accurate. A bot can also run independently without human intervention.

TYPES OF BOTS

Good bots

Good bots help companies scale operations, improve customer engagement, and increase conversion.

- **CHATBOTS**
- **SHOPPING BOTS**
- **MONITORING BOTS**

Malicious bots

Also known as malware bots, malicious bots perform activities that create security risks for organizations.

- **SPAMBOTS**
- **SOCIAL MEDIA BOTS**
- **BOTNET**

HOW TWEETS GET NOTICED

How some tweets dont end up buried among piles of other tweets.

Distribution

To be effective, a tweet has to be distributed (retweeted and be visible for new audiences)

Timing

Has to be visualized by new users fast, so it stays on top of the trends.

On the shoulders of giants

Is more probable that it gets noticed if tags relevant users.

Social help

Other people agrees with the tweet and retweet it.

WHAT DO BOTS DO

- Spread desinformation
  Fake news, conspiration theories.
  Polarizing content.
- Publiah a large number of posts to create the sensation of widespread support for a particular candidate.
- Use key moments in the elections period.
  Just before elections.
  Compromising news
- Makes people think that most people supports some candidate, or get a good or bad impression about some party or person.

Polarize

Fuel political messages

HOW DOES THE PROCESS WORK

- Bots are created by unknown people or organizations.
- Bots start reposting posts with political messages very often.
- Once bots are followed and retweeted by humans, they can become more influential within networks. This could allow them to distribute candidates messages among new audiences.
- Some bots start following each other and creating a botnet, something that appears like a network of human users.
- Clone the behavior of people.

Is hard to tell the actual impact in the outcome of the elections, but they might influence decisions on whether to vote, according to several reserarchers.

HISTORY AND RECENT CASES

2016 US Election

Social-media platforms were used to create discord in the United States in the run up to the 2016 presidential election. Russian operatives used tools such as bots in an attempt to deceive social-media users in this country and sway the election in favour of President Donald Trump.

People retweeted content originated by bots at almost the same rate as content originated by human accounts. One thing at risk is voter turnout. People might think there is real support in a certain state, but in reality it’s all generated by bots.

Elections in Africa

Even in Africa's poorest countries, applications like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp and blogs form an integral part of today's political communication landscape in much of the continent.

Bots in the conversation

As noted by Portland Communications in their report, How Africa Tweets, Twitter bots account for more than 20% of influencers in countries like Lesotho and Kenya.

Government involved

In Kenya, it emerged that President Uhuru Kenyatta had hired CA ahead of the 2013 elections. CA's activities sparked global outcry when it became known, culminating in its collapse.

FUTURE CONCERNS

What's next?
What can we do?

New developments

Concerns over the technology have soared after breakthroughs in generative AI, where tools like ChatGPT and Midjourney produce convincing text, images and even voice on command.

More than messages

Recorded Future, a US cybersecurity firm, said rogue actors could be found selling voice cloning services online, including the ability to clone voices of corporate executives and public figures.

Bot environment

The future will consist of boisterous political debate, mostly bots arguing with other bots. Democracy requires two things to function properly: information and agency. Artificial personas can starve people of both.

¿SOLUTIONS?

“Without widespread education and awareness this could become a real threat vector as we head into the presidential election,” said Alexander Leslie, a Recorded Future analyst.

ChatGPT

What creators think

“Regulation would be quite wise: people need to know if they’re talking to an AI, or if content that they’re looking at is generated or not... regulation and public education.”

Sam Altman, CEO of the ChatGPT creator, OpenAI

THANK YOU!!