

Chapter Seven: Potential Effects on the International Arena

The possible effects of AI technologies on the international arena are enormous. Besides the general race to achieve AI and the arms race in this field, this chapter considers several other potential effects that AI could have on the international arena, as well as the impact of the arms race.¹⁷⁰

Safety and Risks

Today there are no international standards for the safety of AI, except at the state level. As a result, AI systems that have various defects could enter the market, such as a system whose underlying database contains built-in biases against certain populations, or whose database is wrong in the first place so that it could produce erroneous results, or whose code was not trained on a sufficiently large database, and therefore may be erroneous.

The uncontrolled development of AI also poses a risk to safety, as it could become dangerous should systems that develop code on their own spin out of control and undermine proper functioning of vital civilian and military infrastructures.¹⁷¹ One of the main risks results from the race to lead the field of AI, manifested by the investment of countries and the activity of private companies.¹⁷² This phenomenon is apt to influence the international arena—all or in part. Yet, despite these challenges, the international forums have focused only on a few threats, such as the UN attempt to restrict or ban AWS in the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW).¹⁷³

Other Areas of Armament and the Risk of a “Hyperwar”

A major concern is the possible negative impact that AI could have on other areas of armament, such as nuclear armament,¹⁷⁴ as well as the risk of a “hyperwar.” This term relates to war that is carried out with AI, which enables automated decision making, rendering human decision making barely possible during a confrontation in the conventional observe, orient, decide, and act (OODA) loop.¹⁷⁵ As a result, the amount of time associated with the decision-making loop cycle will be reduced to almost immediate reactions. These developments have many changing implications.¹⁷⁶ If the risks of nuclear or other arms races are also included, then the potential for damage to the international arena could be enormous.

The Balance of Power and the Creation of a New World Order

One of the most influential factors affecting a country’s strength is the scope and ability of its population to contribute to the economic, defense, and security sectors.¹⁷⁷ A country with a relatively large and productive population that can be mobilized by the army is stronger than countries that have a smaller population or an aging population and negative growth. However, in the current era, AI and other advanced technologies could strengthen the countries with smaller or aging populations. AI could contribute to creating a new world order, in which countries with small populations could become powerful and relatively influential, by virtue of their increased ability to wage war.¹⁷⁸ It is even beyond what we know today; as technologies become increasingly autonomous, the human involvement will decrease and cause familiar historical phenomena to become increasingly extreme.

A New Bipolar Era: China–United States

The new world order also directly relates to the growing competition between China and the United States.¹⁷⁹ These two countries, whose competition is mainly economic, are also competing in the field of AI, with the understanding that leadership in this field could affect almost any field. Although since the end of the Cold War, the world has enjoyed relative international stability due to the unipolar American hegemony, the competition in AI may become another tier in the struggle between the United States and China for global leadership. This struggle concerningly could return the world to a bipolar

era—a division of the international arena into two blocs, led by these two countries.¹⁸⁰

Widening the Gap between Developed and Developing Countries

Changes in the field of AI may widen the gap between developed countries and developing ones and could limit the ability of the latter to operate in the international arena and perhaps even to maintain their sovereignty.¹⁸¹ This gap could lead to large waves of emigration to advanced countries, or for certain countries—or groups within them—to use violent measures such as terrorism in response to threats because of their inability to cope with the gap that already exists today between those who have access to advanced technologies and those who do not.¹⁸²

Improving the Quality of Life and the Stability of the International Arena through Deterrence

In addition to the pessimistic forecasts concerning the effect of AI on the international arena, it is forecasted that AI will positively increase the global economic growth rate; find cures for illnesses and improve health systems; improve the efficiency and safety of transportation; encourage energy efficiency and improve the understanding of climatic phenomena; and perhaps even to lead to peace-based stability in the international arena by means of deterrence.¹⁸³