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AI and the Battle for Truth

The Emerging Strategic Role of Artificial Intelligence in Global Security

By Irma Argüello – Chair, NPSGLOBAL Foundation. May 2025.

From Nuclear to Algorithmic Deterrence

Since the mid-20th century, power has been measured in nuclear warheads; now, it is also measured in algorithms and silicon. In essence, power is played not only with weapons, but also with data, computation, and standards.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is no longer a distant promise; it is a transformative force reshaping the global security landscape. AI has become a silent actor in the great power game, from synthetic disinformation to autonomous weapons, from strategic deception to narrative manipulation.

The question is no longer whether it will influence international affairs, but how, by whom, and under which principles. In other words, the world is evolving from nuclear to algorithmic deterrence.

As we navigate this transition, a critical challenge arises: ensuring that our time's most powerful technology serves peace, not dominance or destruction.

The Rise of Strategic AI

AI is rapidly becoming a tool of influence, coercion, and dominance. Authoritarian regimes have begun "weaponizing" synthetic media, deploying hyper-realistic avatars and emotionally persuasive content to distort public opinion at scale, often cloaked in Western aesthetics and culture.

Simultaneously, AI systems are integrated into decision-making processes across the military, intelligence, and cyber domains, generally without adequate legal frameworks or ethical safeguards.

This signals a profound shift: from hard power to cognitive manipulation, from deterrence to deception. Strategic advantage in this new terrain comes not exclusively from the power to destroy the adversary, but from reshaping their perception of reality.

The Geopolitics of Silicon: Chips, Conflict, and Control

While most conversations on AI center on software and data, the race for hardware supremacy may be even more decisive.

Advanced AI depends on powerful semiconductors. Taiwan, home to TSMC (Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company), the world's leading chipmaker for AI and GPU technologies, has emerged as a strategic chokepoint in the global tech landscape. As China expands its ambitions over the island just 180 km from the continent and the United States enforces export restrictions on advanced chips and fabrication tools, a new geopolitical flashpoint has emerged: the control of computation itself.

The so-called "chip war" is not merely economic; it reflects a deeper struggle over who will shape the technological infrastructure of the future. The outcome will define not just industrial advantage, but also military capacity, cyber dominance, and AI sovereignty.

AI Governance: Still a Strategic Vacuum

The governance of artificial intelligence remains a lawless frontier, unclaimed, uncoordinated, and dangerously lagging behind the technology itself. Yet, a handful of legal frameworks have begun to emerge, attempting to set the tone for global alignment.

The European Union's AI Act, now entering its implementation phase, is the world's first comprehensive legal framework for artificial intelligence. It classifies AI systems by risk levels and imposes strict requirements on high-risk applications, including transparency, accountability, and traceability standards.[1]

Meanwhile, the Council of Europe's Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence, signed by over 50 countries, aims to ensure that the development and use of AI systems respect human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. Though still early in its implementation, it signals a growing consensus around the need for legal grounding at the multilateral level.[2]

Despite these efforts, no binding international regime yet exists to coordinate or constrain the most powerful uses of AI. The vacuum persists, and its strategic consequences are already visible.

Toward Soft Technological Governance

While legal instruments remain scarce and fragmented, another governance track has quietly emerged, led not by states but by the private sector and scientific institutions. This "soft" technological governance offers an informal but increasingly influential form of norm-setting.

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[1] European Parliament. (2024). Artificial Intelligence Act (AI Act).
[2] Council of Europe. (2024). Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence

The Singapore Consensus on Global AI Safety Research Priorities, launched in 2025, brings together leading AI companies, research institutions, and policy experts to establish a shared research agenda focused on the safety of advanced models. Though non-binding, its goals include evaluating frontier risks, improving model transparency, and identifying technical guardrails that could guide future regulation.[3]

In parallel, the Model Context Protocol (MCP), developed by actors like OpenAI, Google DeepMind, and Anthropic, proposes a framework for aligning large language models through voluntary interoperability and safety standards. [4]

Rather than imposing rules through government mandate, the MCP functions as a meta-standard: a set of shared assumptions that enables safe interaction among AI systems without sacrificing proprietary architectures.

These initiatives do not replace legal governance, but they point to a world where AI diplomacy may begin among engineers, and private consensus can sometimes move faster than states' agreements.

Without formal treaties, this soft layer may be essential for creating a flexible, responsible global AI order.

The Paradox of Ethical Restraint

However, democratic nations face a dilemma with deep moral and strategic implications: should they self-impose limits on AI development while authoritarian actors proceed without constraints?

This paradox of ethical restraint, which means choosing not to develop or deploy certain specific capabilities based on values, can become an unmanageable vulnerability if those same capabilities are exploited by others without scruples.

Yet abandoning ethical leadership is not the answer. The path forward requires bold, anticipatory governance that can balance innovation with responsibility before others define the rules by force or silence.

AI in the Field: Real-World Applications and Silent Operations

Far from speculative, artificial intelligence is already being deployed in security environments across the globe, often in ways that escape public scrutiny.

Loitering munitions with autonomous target identification have been spotted in active theaters of conflict, including Ukraine, where both Russian and Ukrainian forces have deployed them in tactical operations. [5]

Satellite imagery is increasingly processed by AI models that detect troop movements or treaty violations faster than any human analyst. In cyberspace, machine learning tools expose intrusions, track disinformation campaigns, and monitor hybrid operations.

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[3] Singapore Consensus on Global AI Safety Research Priorities. (2025).

[4] Anthropic, Google DeepMind, OpenAI. (2024). Model Context Protocol (MCP).

[5] OHCHR (2024) Report on Human Rights Situation in Ukraine

Even arms control is evolving: some verification protocols now rely on AI to analyze open-source intelligence, adding a new layer to global transparency mechanisms.

None of this is theoretical. These tools already operate in silence, extending the reach of state power and challenging the very concept of accountability. If AI reshapes the battlefield, it also redefines what it means to act responsibly.

The Future of Diplomacy: From Negotiation to Algorithmic Foresight

Artificial intelligence is shaping conflict and may soon shape diplomacy itself.

Research groups are beginning to experiment with large language models to anticipate escalation patterns, assist in drafting peace proposals, and simulate negotiation dynamics under different scenarios. These tools are far from mature, but their potential to influence high-level political processes is already visible.

If AI can detect early signals of conflict before what human analysts can do or generate credible proposals that reduce bias in tense environments, it might become a quiet yet powerful ally in preventive diplomacy.

However, such possibilities come with risks. Algorithmic mediation could distort human responsibility or introduce opaque assumptions into processes that require transparency and trust.

What today seems experimental may soon become operational. Whether this empowers diplomacy or erodes it will depend not on the models alone, but on the principles we encode within them.

Dual AI Worlds: Open Weights, Closed Regimes

A subtle yet critical fracture in the AI ecosystem lies in the divergence between closed-source models (OpenAI, Google) and open-source models (Meta's LLaMA, Mistral). This tension between open and closed models has become increasingly relevant.

While open-sourcing software can enhance transparency and foster innovation, releasing the weights of advanced AI models may pose significant risks, such as misuse by non-state actors or authoritarian governments. They might play a hybrid game: exploiting democratic states' research while building models aligned with their state goals and ideological filters, which could be easily imposed through biased training and weight settings. In January 2025, Jeoffrey Hinton, the pioneer of AI, emphasized the risks of releasing model weights, comparing them to the public availability of nuclear materials.[6]

The Battle for Truth

Ultimately, the strategic power of artificial intelligence lies not in machines but in meaning. This is not a technological competition. It is a struggle over what we will believe in the future. AI systems are

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[6] As Geoffrey Hinton recently argued: "If you release the weights of that model, you can now fine-tune it to all sorts of bad things. So I think it's crazy to release the weights of these big models, because they are our main constraint on bad actors." Hinton, G. (2025). "Releasing Foundational Model Weights Is Like Making Nuclear Material Freely Available." OfficeChai.

being trained not just on data, but also on narratives and values, which will shape the future global environment. We should not pretend this battle is neutral, nor should we surrender it.

Effective governance must come, not from slogans or symbolic inclusion, but from those willing to engage power with principle, and clarity with courage. The goal is not perfection, as history has shown in other regimes, such as the global nuclear order, but coherence. And in the age of artificial intelligence, perhaps the most strategic act is also the most human.

We still have a choice: to be authors of the future, rather than passive users of its code.

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About the NPSGLOBAL Foundation

For 18 years, the NPSGLOBAL Foundation, an independent, private non-profit based in Buenos Aires, has served as the leading Latin American focal point on global security, with strong engagement in international disarmament, non-proliferation, and risk reduction. Its track record includes strategic advising, high-level education, and cooperation with governments, multilateral bodies, and global think tanks.

Today, NPSGLOBAL is expanding its work into emerging fields, including the strategic implications of artificial intelligence and new technologies. Through research, policy engagement, and education, the Foundation aims to foster a responsible and forward-looking global agenda for AI governance and security.