



DOI: [https://doi.org/10.71317/kjard.2.8\(s\).2026.622](https://doi.org/10.71317/kjard.2.8(s).2026.622)

Kashmir Journal of Academic Research and Development

Journal homepage: <https://rjsaonline.org/index.php/KJARD>



Artificial Intelligence and the Emerging Global Order: AI Diplomacy, Geopolitical Competition and International Security

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ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Received:

June 11, 2026

Revised:

July 19, 2026

Accepted:

July 26, 2026

Available Online:

August 22, 2026

Keywords:

Artificial Intelligence; Global Order; Geopolitical Competition; International Security; Military AI; Autonomous Weapons; Cybersecurity; Semiconductor Competition; AIGovernance; Technological Power; Global South.

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The world is witnessing the growing integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into its political landscape, shaping the perception of states regarding technological strength, strategic rivalry, military force, and global security. The world is increasingly seeing AI (Artificial Intelligence) entering into the realm of politics, and affecting the states' understandings of technological power, strategic competition, military capability and international security. Its potential impact extends beyond individual applications as AI development is closely linked to data, computing infrastructure, semiconductors, capabilities in cyber, surveillance systems and new governance systems. However, much of the current scholarship focuses on one dimension or another rather than institutionalizing an understanding of how these dimensions play out in the formation of a changing global order. This is a qualitative investigation of how these new capabilities of AI are impacting geopolitical competition and shaping future international security. The research adopts a secondary and documentary approach, building on existing peer-reviewed academic literature, policy documents, institutional reports and authoritative international evaluations, with the guiding lens of interpretivist approach. The material is analyzed to detect the commonalities and the similarities in the literature, using a thematic analysis. The study addresses interrelated themes related to AI and global power, the US-China technological arms race, military AI and autonomous weapons, AI-enabled cyber and surveillance capabilities, semiconductors and supply-chain vulnerabilities, and global governance of AI. The study does not believe that AI is a foregone conclusion that will change the nature of international politics, but rather it reads the ways in which technological developments are perceived and integrated within power and security frameworks. The study concludes that AI is an emerging key structural determinant in the overall competition and generates new technological dependency and uncertainty in governance. Its value is in the integration of the technological, geopolitical, military, infrastructural and normative aspects in one qualitative interpretation. Inclusive governance, strategic dialogue, human oversight and increased awareness of the needs of technologically dependent states are among the key points the study underlines as being crucial to the maintenance of international security.

Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become a more and more central feature of international power, security, and global governance debates, rather than being on the fringes of policy. The understanding of technological capabilities is evolving with advancements in machine learning, generative AI, autonomous systems, data analytics, cyber technologies, and advanced computing, among other areas, by states and other actors. But the significance of AI is not to be limited to the performance of specific systems. Its broader meaning becomes apparent in its political and economic context, such as access to data, computing facilities, state-of-the-art semiconductors, research skills, digital platforms, and global markets. Accordingly, the current scholarship of international relations has engaged AI as a socio-technical process whose impact hinges on how states, institutions, firms, and societies make sense of and integrate it into the prevailing framework of political institutions (Bode, 2024; Erskine, 2024). (Taylor & Francis Online)

From the interpretivist point of view, this is the significant aspect of development because technology does not lead to one and only one political outcome. Political actors' views on technological advantage, national security, strategic vulnerability, responsible innovation, and international cooperation provide the context for the meaning and consequences of AI. A state could view another country's AI investment as an opportunity for its economy, a military threat, or a sign of a shift in global power. These interpretations may shape policy responses and, ultimately, to cooperation and competition patterns. As Bode (2024) observes, international relation studies of AI have focused mainly on themes such as balance of power, governance, disinformation, and ethics, and have omitted an analysis of the socio-technical nature of AI, as well as the working of other actors besides the major powers. (Taylor & Francis Online)

The shift in the role of AI is thus intertwined with the larger geopolitical dynamics. Power in traditional conceptions has been largely focused on military power, economy, territory and diplomacy. AI does not turn these sources of power into non-issues – it's getting more involved with them. Advanced computing, semiconductor technologies, data resources, research networks, and highly skilled labour may provide states with the ability to gain advantages that impact both the economic and security sphere. Meanwhile, reliance on technology can generate new vulnerabilities. Technologically-advantaged players could have the means to shape access to resources other states need to develop AI.

The dynamics of technology and power is particularly reflected in the US-China strategic rivalry. AI has emerged as a component of a broader competition between cutting-edge semiconductors, research, tech firms, digital infrastructure, and standards. The competition isn't just about which country comes up with the most powerful AI systems. It's also about who has access to and can master important technological resources and whose regulatory and technological models are influential on the international stage. For instance, the way China, the United States, and EU are developing governance structures for AI reveals notable disparities in perspectives on regulation, governance, innovation, and individual rights (Mokry, 2024). (Wiley Online Library)

The rivalry between the U.S. and China is also a reflection of a larger phenomenon: technological interdependence versus strategic separation. The attempt to gain control over vital supply chains and to limit access to advanced technologies is becoming more and more motivated by national security reasons. Meanwhile, the development of AI still relies on the cross-border connections of research, investment, production, data, and technical expertise. Deeper technological separation is therefore challenging even in the pursuit of greater strategic autonomy by governments. This sets the stage for an international climate of collaboration and competition, not of one or the other. The uncertainty that resulted is crucial to understanding the new order that is unfolding in a globalised world, as technological policies can simultaneously diminish specific vulnerabilities and leave behind new forms of fragmentation.

The military's use of AI is another critical aspect of this transformation. AI is becoming a staple of intelligence analysis, surveillance, decision support, logistics, targeting, autonomous platforms and command and control systems. But there is no blanket assumption that AI will supplant the decisions of humans or create fully autonomous warfare, as evidenced by the literature. Rather, scholars highlight the ongoing and enduring relevance of human judgment, organizational architecture, and institutional decision-making. For instance, Goldfarb and Lindsay (2022) make a distinction between machine-based prediction and human judgment, proposing that AI could change the context of military decision-making, but not its role.

These issues are most acute in the discussion of autonomous weapons. With the increasing capabilities of AI systems to identify objects, process information, and assist or make operational decisions, the issues of human control, accountability, and responsibility and compliance with IHL become relevant. In his book, Erskine (2024) emphasizes that it is becoming harder to determine moral blame when more and more complex AI systems are making decisions with impact. Internationally, there is still a long way to go before establishing norms for military AI. The current debates about governance suggest that states agree that there is a need for responsible development and use of military AI, but also disagree on the nature and extent of appropriate international rules for AI. (Carnegie Endowment)

Cyber and information security is also transforming with the power of AI. While AI can bolster the defensive aspect of cybersecurity, it can also be used to aid in offensive cyber operations. Automated systems can enable the processing of vast amounts of information in a short time, which may aid with reconnaissance, identification of vulnerabilities, and creation of deceptive material. Part of the concern about security is the 'dual use' of AI. Technologies can be a source of protection in one situation, but a source of vulnerability in another. The interplay between AI and security is far more nuanced and complicated than simply separating out the good and bad uses of AI.

AI powered surveillance is an example of this complexity. The advanced data-processing systems can assist in intelligence collection, border surveillance, public-security operations and the processing of huge amounts of digital data. These features could give governments more insight into what is happening, but they also raise questions about the privacy implications, the political control of the information and its accountability, and the centralization of informational power. These worries are not limited to internal affairs. The diffusion of surveillance technologies can impact on diplomatic relationships as well as security and perceptions of dependence on technology, when it enters into international competition.

Thus, the material bases of artificial intelligence have gained more and more significance in the analysis of geopolitics. A sophisticated semiconductor, high performance computing, data centres, energy, telecommunications infrastructure and technical expertise are all required for advanced AI systems. Access to these resources is not equal. Consequently, technological competition is now not just about algorithms, but also the platform that supports the development and execution of algorithms. This may account for the relationship between semiconductor production and supply chains and national security policy. Thus, the governance of AI and competition are an integral part of the issue of economic security and strategic reliance.

In parallel with such material advances, governments and international entities try to build governance for AI. However, the new governance landscape is still very fractured. There are divergent ways of tackling innovation, safety, accountability, data governance, and state oversight in China, the U.S., the European Union and beyond. While these disparities may seem like matters of technical disagreement, they actually stem from diverging visions of how AI should be regulated in the future, as Mokry (2024) shows. On the military side, the lack of any comprehensive international agreement is an issue as states are building up their capabilities and discussing the extent of their responsible use. (Carnegie Endowment)

In the age of AI, international security is an important question: what is the connection between AI, geopolitical competition, technological dependency, military transformation and international governance in an evolving international order? There is some useful research available which has shed light on parts of this question, but which is a bit disjointed. Research on military AI is often centered on autonomy and weapons systems, cybersecurity research on new cyber threats, geopolitical research on the competition between the US and China, technology-policy research on semiconductors and supply chains, and governance research on regulatory differences and international norms. The contributions are important, but detaching them from each other makes it hard to understand how they support and limit each other.

Another constraint is the focus on the big tech giants. The technology and strategic capabilities of the U.S. and China naturally warrant a lot of focus. But, the repercussions of AI reach beyond these states. The opportunity, dependence, and vulnerability of countries in the Global South can vary in their nature, as they may depend on products and services designed by Global North entities like hardware, cloud services, AI models, and regulations. Bode (2024) suggests that a more reflective approach to the "Global South" actors is required, since their actions and reactions can have an impact on the new international order. By ignoring these actors, a future for AI governance that is dominated by technologically powerful states is being presented.

The latest study addresses these gaps by analysing AI and the new order of the world in an interpretivist qualitative way. The study does not try to foresee a single technological future or quantify the impact of AI with a metric or indicator, but rather it aims to examine the process by which key political and security implications are being built and linked to the concept of AI, based on current scholarship and authoritative documentary evidence. Peer-reviewed studies, policy documents, institutional reports and international assessments are used as secondary sources, which are interpreted thematically. Six key areas are highlighted, each connected to the others: global power dynamics, US-China technological rivalry, military AI and autonomous arms, cyber and surveillance technologies, technological dependency in supply chains, and international governance of AI.

The following research questions are used to guide the study:

RQ1: What is AI understood as a driver of shifting power and geopolitical influence in the world?

RQ2: What is the relationship between the development of AI, US-China technological competition, military applications, cyber capabilities and technological dependencies in current international security discourses?

RQ3: What governance problems and strategic risks come from these developments, especially in the case of international cooperation and technologically dependent states?

The study's qualitative approach prevents the application of the term "international order" to the new international order that AI will create. Rather, it explores the meanings, relationships, and patterns that are shaping the embedding of AI in the current international political structure. It is unique in integrating the technological, geopolitical, military, infrastructural and governance dimensions into a coherent analytical framework. This is because it's not just a new weapon, nor just an economic technology when it comes to AI. More and more becomes part of the global order of power and security. Therefore, the consequences of AI must be understood beyond what AI can accomplish to how states and other actors consider the capabilities of AI, navigate the risks of AI, and manage shifting relationships of dependence and influence with AI.

Literature Review

As AI has become a matter of strategic competition, transformation of military forces, economic security and international governance, the literature on the subject has grown tremendously. However, the scholarship does not offer any one definition of the role of AI in the international order. There are different interpretations of AI, with some viewing it as a general-purpose technology that will change the distribution of economic and military power, and others warning that AI alone does not necessarily challenge existing international power dynamics. An interpretivist reading is especially informative because AI's meaning is not defined solely by the technologies themselves; it's also defined by the nature of the understanding and the political construction of those technologies by states, military institutions, technology companies and international organizations. Previous studies already indicated that AI might influence the future of war and balance of power, as it will impact strategic competition, intelligence and military decision-making (Johnson, 2019). This conversation has grown more recent, expanded to incorporate governance, supply chains, information warfare and unequal technological development. (Taylor & Francis Online)

AI and Changing of the Global Power and International Order

An emerging theme in the new literature is that AI is an increasingly relevant part of a nation's power. The classic view of international power has focused on the military, the economy, territory, people, and institutional power. But AI makes this complicated because complex computing power relies on less tangible things such as data, algorithms, semiconductors, cloud computing servers, technical expertise, research institutions, and access to technological networks around the world. Therefore, AI strength goes beyond just having complex algorithms at its disposal. Its true essence lies in the technological, economic, institutional and political abilities available to users, and it is more frequently viewed as an ecosystem of these capabilities.

This view counters the technologically deterministic view of AI. Having a cutting edge model does not imply geopolitical influence without the presence of computing infrastructure, skilled researchers, data, capital, or secure supply chains. Likewise, political limitations, market reliance and critical components shortages can be factors that lead to a decline in technological leadership. For instance, Johnson (2019) believes that AI could be part of strategic competition and volatility, yet urges the need to examine the impact of technology on current military and geopolitical frameworks. An interpretative approach is in line with the interpretivist concept of the international order which sees technology as a social and political product rather than something operating outside of it. (Taylor & Francis Online)

It is also suggested in the literature that AI is impacting sovereignty as well. As populations and social interactions are increasingly transformed into data, new dynamics of relations between states, companies and citizens are being established, according to Goode (2021). This evolution could alter the exercise of sovereignty, as states rely more and more on private, technological infrastructures and platforms. This relationship between the state and corporate technology power that results poses a challenge to the traditional view of the state as the only determinant of international politics. (Wiley Online Library)

However, there is not enough evidence that the current international order is about to be replaced entirely. Many of the literature talks about the transformative role of AI but transformation is not synonymous with a systemic rupture. The factors for the adoption of emerging technologies are still the same as those for the adoption of technologies that already exist, such as military institutions, alliances, economic relationships, and national interests. The most plausible one is therefore that AI is changing the sources and means of power in the current international system, instead of forming a completely new system.

The Digital World: New Technologies and an Emerging Middle Belt

One of the most explored aspects of the AI geopolitics is the rivalry between the US and China. With its leading positions in artificial intelligence, advanced computing, semiconductors, military use, and digital infrastructure, the two states are often seen as rivals. While some scholars argue that AI is linked to a broader strategic rivalry between Washington and Beijing,

others have considered it to be a technological race or a security dilemma, or a larger contest for the structure of the global political economy.

Technological competition is an aspect of one strand of scholarship. AI is increasingly associated from this point of view with national innovation systems, industrial policy, research capacity, military modernization and economic competitiveness. The technology of semiconductors is significant because advanced systems of AI need to have a strong calculation equipment. The recent scholarship put it this way: semiconductors are a geopolitical frontier where economic interdependence is increasingly expressed as a matter of national security. The US – China competition has thus moved beyond a mere trade war to technological sovereignty and control over key supply chains. (Springer)

But it's important not to overlook important aspects of interdependence when talking about the “AI race.” The distribution of technological production is a global one, with various countries and companies managing research, design, manufacturing, equipment and distribution. As a result the U.S. and China do not have 100% technological sovereignty. The literature on semiconductor competition reveals that efforts to break strategic dependence can lead to the emergence of new strategic dependencies in other parts of the business. For example, Hah (2025) singles out the oligopolistic nature of semiconductor manufacturing as one of the most important sources of strategic competition, as the United States and China both strive for technological security, despite being part of interdependent global value chains. (Jati)

The competition has an ideational aspect too. AI is becoming a more and more iconic brand of national pride, technological sovereignty, and future international leadership. The term “AI nationalism” developed by Goode (2021) comes in handy here, as it highlights the potential of technology to be embedded in nationalistic narratives and identities. The competition is not only over improvements to systems but also about whose technological standards, regulatory principles and political models become influential internationally. (Wiley Online Library)

In parallel, there is an essential paradox in the literature. There are some signs that technological competition is creating a bipolar technological order, and others stress the continued significance of middle powers, multinational corporations, international research networks, and global markets. The evidence, instead, is pointing toward a more nuanced dynamic of technological alignment, strategic cooperation and strategic fragmentation between the United States and China, and thus a more complex, rather than binary, dynamic.

AI, Military Transformation and Autonomous Weapons

Another popular area of research are the military applications. AI has come into the limelight with regards to intelligence analysis, surveillance, target recognition, decision support, logistics, autonomous systems and command and control. These developments are not just about automating individual military activities, but about the potential for transforming the speed and configuration of military decision making.

The notion that AI might have strategic implications, ranging from tactical battlefield uses to higher levels of military competition, is what Johnson (2019) has been discussing. Later on in the discussions, one can again hear a focus on how AI-driven systems might enhance information processing and decision support but also pose new vulnerabilities and uncertainties. It is not just about whether machines are going to replace soldiers, it's about whether military organisations are going to increasingly rely on algorithmic systems that may not be interpreted or predicted. (Taylor & Francis Online)

Ethical and legal questions have arisen in particular about autonomous weapons. The question that is at the heart of the matter is how much autonomy should be given to a weapon system in selecting and engaging targets. In the literature, the approaches dealing with humanitarian risks are split between those regarding the controlled technological development. Research on state positions shows there are no common international positions on lethal autonomous weapons. There is a disagreement between states on the prohibition, regulation, imposition of human-control requirements on such systems, or the discussion of such systems within existing international legal frameworks. (ScienceDirect)

In both academic and policy debates, the notion of meaningful human control has come to the forefront. But the literature calls into doubt the capacity of human oversight in the face of more sophisticated autonomous systems creating greater fundamental problems. Blauth (2023) explores whether existing concepts of meaningful human control can be applied to the political, legal, technological and operational issues raised by autonomous weapons. Likewise, McFarland and Assaad (2023) point out that this is particularly challenging for weapons reviews since the systems in the field may react differently than those initially reviewed. (DOI)

This debate is completed with the interpretivist perspective. “Autonomy” is not a technically neutral word. The concepts of acceptable human control can have varying definitions in different military institutions and states depending on strategic culture, operational needs, legal norms and political priorities. The literature should not consider autonomous weapons

simply as technical objects, therefore. They are also political and normative constructs where the legitimacy is negotiated in the international discourse.

Cyber Warfare and New Security Challenges Facilitated by AI

AI is also revolutionizing how we approach cybersecurity. AI is transforming cybersecurity practices, too. AI can be used in defensive operations to detect anomalies, identify threats, assess vulnerabilities, and respond automatically. All of the same technologies can be used to facilitate and accelerate phishing, social engineering, malware creation, information manipulation, and other cyber operations by malicious actors at the same time.

The controversial nature of AI makes it hard to regulate. Studies exploring the intersection of AI and cybersecurity reveal a complex interplay: while some forms of AI enhance cybersecurity, others pose risks. AI and cybersecurity form a complex relationship that some studies suggest is positive and others negative. Instead, the security concerns vary based on the context of the AI's implementation. The relationship of AI to cybersecurity is not consistent across contexts, but the more automation is involved, the more sophisticated attackers are, the more likely it is a state-sponsored attack, and the more geopolitical tensions, the stronger the impact of AI, according to one recent study (Is artificial intelligence a new battleground for cybersecurity? 2024). (ScienceDirect)

The recent literature on information warfare also illustrates the relevance of AI going beyond traditional cyberattacks. AI systems can help states create, target and disseminate information. A study of the United States, China, and Russia shows how AI is being used in information warfare/influence operations to align with each state's overall strategic goals (Hennig et al., 2024). (Taylor & Francis Online)

But importantly, don't assume that all cyber threats are created by AI from the start. Other vulnerabilities are still related to the weak security practices, insecure systems, insufficient institutional capacity, and weak governance, which are the legacies of previous issues. The impact of AI is usually the quickness, quantity and reach of what is already possible. It is crucial for this difference to be pointed out as exaggerated claims of AI-powered cyberwarfare can make it easy to miss long term vulnerabilities in national cybersecurity infrastructure.

Perceptions play a role in shaping cyber threats from an interpretivist point of view. AI can be seen as a defensive innovation for one state and an attacking readiness for another. These conflicting definitions can lead to mistrust and security dilemmas, especially if it is hard for states to differentiate between defensive and offensive AI development.

Semiconductors, Data, Computing Infrastructure and Technological Supply Chains

Physical infrastructure is as crucial to geopolitical AI capabilities as the software itself, a fact increasingly acknowledged in the literature. The stuff that makes AI what it is is advanced semiconductors, high-performance computers, data centers, cloud infrastructure, energy systems and special manufacturing equipment. This has drawn the attention of the conversation from "AI competition" to the larger topic of technological supply-chain security.

Advanced AI technology needs sophisticated processors and manufacturing facilities, and semiconductors are key. Commercial technologies can turn into strategic resources, as is happening with the U.S.-China competition in semiconductors. The latest studies suggest that the US-China rivalry has spurred a push for the deployment of tariffs and alternative economic tools to lessen or eliminate technological vulnerability and enhanced a global value chain fragmentation. (Springer)

This is an important step in the new definition of economic security. In the past, interdependence and mutuality among the economies of different countries were synonymous with efficiency. Yet, the dependence on technology is increasingly becoming a liability to states as a threat to national security. This has stimulated policies to reshoring production, diversifying supplier bases, control exports, and develop technological capabilities in the domestic market.

However, fragmentation of the supply chain presents risks as well. The literature indicates that dependence-reduction efforts can lead to higher costs, reduced innovation and lower cooperation between countries. The question is not only whether or not states need to be technologically independent, but how they can be resilient without losing interdependence. As illustrated in the semiconductor debate, AI geopolitics cannot be separated from the broader global political economy.

This technological power disparity is also due to the production of data and computing power. Other nations have better research institutes, capital markets, advanced technology infrastructure and larger technology industries, and these are hard for less developed countries to grow rapidly. This forms a meaningful connection between global inequality and competition regarding AI.

AI Governance, International Norms and Strategic Fragmentation

AI's swift progress has spurred a lot of debate on global governance. However, the literature is growing more and more aware that this is not a governance process that takes place in a single international institution. Rather, the governance is starting to unfold via national law, regional regulation, international bodies, voluntary principles, corporate standards, and diplomatic efforts.

As noted by Lundgren (2023), international relations scholarship has been devoted to the specific applications of AI, while less has been written about the architecture of global governance of AI. It reflects a significant shift in the literature – it's not just about what AI can do, but who can decide what AI can do. (OUP Academic)

Similarly, Roberts et al. (2024) state that there are important geopolitical and institutional challenges to global AI governance. They say that AI governance is growing as a diffuse “regime complex” instead of a unified, worldwide institution. The realism of this argument is important. Different strategic interests, regulatory traditions, economic incentives, and conceptions of security exist among the major powers. Thus, the process of developing universal consensus on AI governance is challenging. (OUP Academic)

The independent-weapon literature supports this fact. There is no universal agreement internationally about acceptable autonomy in lethal weapons, with states taking different positions. This creates a tension between transnational nature of AI risks and state-based system of international governance.

There are 2 interpretations of this fragmentation. Fragmented governance, on the other hand, can facilitate experimentation and adaptation, as rules can be formulated at different governance levels to address local context. However, there is also the potential for regulatory competition, technological blocs, and disparate protections. Csernaton (2024) points out the geopolitical and regulatory challenges the European Union tackles as it tries to link technological innovation, trustable AI, economic competitiveness and strategic autonomy. (Carnegie Endowment)

The literature thus highlights a central paradox: AI provides powerful reasons to cooperate internationally, as the impacts of AI are transborder but it simultaneously provides reasons not to cooperate, as countries are engaged in geopolitical competition. Deciphering this paradox is key to comprehending the unfinished nature of global governance of AI.

International Security and the Global South implications

One of the limitations of much of the literature is that there is a focus on the major technological powers. The focus is largely on America, China, and, to a lesser degree, the European Union when it comes to AI competition, military uses, and AI governance. This will lead to an analytical imbalance as states without similar technological capabilities will also suffer from the impact of AI.

The “AI divide” is a topic that has come into the spotlight in research on the Global South. The issue isn't just access to AI applications, but the distribution of computing infrastructure, technical capacity, investment, and data resources and institutional capacity. Recent scholarship suggests that states beginning at a disadvantaged point in the digital world could find it more challenging to reap the rewards of AI and be more vulnerable to its social and security threats. (Springer)

A geopolitical dimension to this inequality as well. Relying on foreign platforms and cloud services, digital infrastructure, and AI systems can lead to new technological dependency. Research on AI governance from a Global South perspective points to problems of sovereignty, unequal power dynamics, contextual bias and the potential for technologies to be developed in the Global North that do not adequately capture local institutional and social contexts. (Law in Changing World Journal)

But the states of the Global South should not be viewed exclusively in terms of their role as recipients of technological change. They have agency, both in terms of regional cooperation, regulatory decisions, digital diplomacy, investment in human resources and in the selection of technological partnerships. What's tricky about it is they tend to be limited in their choices of where to get capital, infrastructure and high-tech solutions because they are not always available equally.

From an international security perspective, this could lead to impacts beyond the great-power rivalry in the field of AI competition. Asymmetric access to defence cyber capabilities or reliance on foreign technologies might lead to a greater vulnerability, while differing governance standards could make international cooperation more difficult. The understanding of the changing global order thus needs to be more than just technological leaders; it needs to be more than just states that are at the center of competing technological fields; it needs to be more than just the states in between. The present study aims to fill the research gap and relevance.

As detailed in the literature review above there is a considerable amount of research on specific aspects of AI and security, which is somewhat scattered across technology, military, economic, cyber, legal and governance discourses. Previous research has offered useful insights into the impacts of AI on military matters, US-China competition, autonomous weapons, cybersecurity, semiconductor geopolitics, and global governance. However, these strands tend to be studied individually. The link between them (and their implications for the evolving international order) is comparatively less qualitatively integrated, however.

The second gap relates to the overstated technological determinism. A few works in the literature tacitly suggest that there will be automatic repercussions in international power relations with the advent of ever more capable AI. However, it appears that technological abilities come to assume strategic relevance in the hands of institutions, political decisions, economic systems, national stories, and international conventions. An interpretivist approach can thus be helpful in exploring the meanings attributed by various actors to the power, security, autonomy, technological sovereignty, and strategic competition of AI.

A third gap is in the Global South. It is recognized that digital inequality and AI guidelines beyond the major powers is a subject of growing interest in the field of emerging scholarship, but the international-security literature is still predominantly interested in the United States, China, and technologically more advanced countries. As AI technology becomes more fragmented, the issue of the impact it can have on states with less computational, financial and institutional capacity needs to be paid more attention.

This qualitative study helps to bridge these gaps by synthesizing the key themes of scholarship into one interpretive analysis of AI and the global order. This book does not view AI as a force that mechanically reshapes international politics; it considers AI as a tool that becomes part of geopolitical competition, military transformation, technological threats and opportunities, geopolitical supply chains, governance debates, and global inequalities. In this way, one can detect continuity and change: AI can change the nature and sources of international power as well as state competition, without necessarily replacing it.

In general, literature suggests the security relevance of AI is not as much in the technology as in a combination of technological capability and geopolitical structure. AI is joining the larger global competition for military supremacy, economic strength, technological dominance, influence on information and international rule-setting. Meanwhile, the disjointedness of AI governance and the lack of technological capacity means that the impacts will not be felt equally. We can, therefore, see the value of an interpretivist qualitative perspective that enables these alternative meanings, interests and institutional frameworks to be seen, rather than omitted, when the global order is changing and is not being reduced to a technological competition.

Research Methodology

Designers and philosophers of research

This study uses qualitative research design that is based on interpretivist philosophical approach. The selection of the approach is based on the research problem, which is centered around the understanding and interpretation of artificial intelligence (AI) as a dynamic source of geopolitical power, technological reliance, military power, and international security. In contrast to seeing these developments as objective realities, interpretivism views political and technological realities as having meaning given through the interpretation, assumptions, policies, and institutional reactions of those with a stake in them. The methodology is suitable to analyze the conflicting interpretations of AI and the world order.

The study is not statistically testing hypotheses or establishing causal relationships using numerical measurement of variables. Rather, it seeks to create an interpretation of patterns that emerges from the study of existing scholarly work and official documentary sources, while taking into account the context of those sources. Qualitative inquiry is especially appropriate when the goal is to gain an understanding of the complex relationships and meanings in their broader social and political contexts. AI, in this study, is thus studied not as a technological innovation, but as a phenomenon that is part of geopolitical, economic, military, and institutional systems.

The approach is to use a documentary and Secondary-Data Approach. Documentary and Secondary-Data Approach is used.

Only used documentary and secondary sources for the research. No interviews, surveys, questionnaires, experiments or field observations were carried out. Documentary analysis is suitable as documents can offer adequate evidence of policies, institutional stance, technological advancements, and debates, which are hard to be captured from a single empirical setting (Bowen, 2009). Documents are not perceived as neutral, but rather as interpretive. In developing the analysis, their arguments, emphases, assumptions, and omissions are taken into consideration.

The documentary corpus consists of four general categories: (1) peer-reviewed academic studies; (2) policy and strategy documents from governments and international organisations; (3) reports from respected research institutions and technology or security organisations; (4) authoritative international assessments pertaining to AI, technology and security. The academic literature was searched with the help of the following databases: Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, JSTOR, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis, SAGE and IEEE Xplore. To reflect the rapid advances in cutting-edge AI capabilities and the increased prominence of AI in the geopolitical and security discourse, greater weight was given to literature published from 2020-26. Where earlier methodological and theoretical texts helped to provide an underlying conceptual framework, these were retained.

Search Strategy and Selection Criteria

Artificial intelligence and global order, AI and geopolitics, AI and international security, US-China AI competition, military artificial intelligence, autonomous weapons, AI and cyber warfare, AI surveillance, semiconductor geopolitics, AI supply chains, and global AI governance were among the terms used in the literature search. In order to search across databases, adjustments were made to the searches based on their database indexing and search capabilities. Additional reviews of relevant literature were also conducted to uncover significant previous work and methodological contributions.

Relevance, credibility, topical consistency, analytical value were used to guide the selection. Documents were added where they explicitly connected AI to international politics and geopolitical competition, military change, cybersecurity, technological infrastructure, supply chains, governance, or international security. Peer reviewed papers and authoritative institutional documents were given preference. The documents excluded were not primarily promotional, were technically not relevant to the research questions, appeared to be duplicated elsewhere, were not sufficiently academically or institutionally credible, and/or were dealing with AI applications without being relevant to the international-security aspect of the research. The selection was therefore not a statistically representative sample but rather a purposeful sample. This fits with the interpretive goal of the research, the usefulness of which primarily depends on the usefulness of the source to the research phenomenon.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection involved in identifying the relevant documents, screening the documents, reading the documents, and organizing them systematically. First, the titles and abstracts of the sources were checked to see if they dealt with the study's main questions. More detailed reading was then done on potentially relevant documents from which substantive passages were selected and arranged for the purpose of interpretation and discussion of technological power, geopolitical competition, military applications, cyber capabilities, surveillance, infrastructure, supply chains, and governance. The differences in the description of similar developments in the academic, governmental, and institutional sources were also given attention.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the collected data. Thematic analysis is suitable when the researcher wants to uncover patterns of meaning that emerge across a wide range of qualitative data, and maintain attention to the context and interpretation of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The procedure was a flexible, reflexive sequence that did not focus on a purely mechanical aspect of coding. First, the researcher read the material several times to gain familiarity with the material. Second, the initial codes were formulated around key ideas, arguments, and concerns that arose repeatedly. Thirdly, cross-referencing and categorizing related codes into more general patterns. Fourth, new themes were vetted through the material in the documents to make sure that they were not just about something that happened separately and separately. Lastly, themes were developed and linked to the research questions as well as the broader literature.

The analysis resulted in a coherent thematic framework on themes of AI and global power, AI and technological competition between the United States and China, military AI and autonomous weapons, AI-enabled cyber and surveillance capabilities, AI dependency on semiconductors and technological supply chains, AI governance and the development of international norms, and the consequences of AI for international security and the Global South. These themes are not separately described as completely independent themes. Rather, their relationships were explored. The semiconductor dependency, for example, was understood in the context of geopolitical competition, and military AI understood in the context of data, computing infrastructure, cyber and international governance. This approach enabled the study to transcend a descriptive catalogue of AI applications and interpretation of the interplay among various dimensions of the technological power.

The analysis also adhered to the reflexive thematic approach which views interpretation as an integral element of the research process, actively searching for themes in the data rather than a process of uncovering themes that have already been identified (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The researcher thus kept an eye on alternative explanations and conflicting arguments in the literature. When scholarship was used to identify the strategic potential for AI, this was weighed against work focused on the constraints of the organization, uncertainty, technological dependence, and the governance constraints.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

The trustworthiness of the analysis was enhanced by several means. First, through the use of source triangulation, research found in the peer-reviewed literature was compared to policy documents, institutional reports, and international assessments. This helped mitigate a reliance on a particular kind of evidence and enabled to bring into the light the differences between scholarly and policy interpretations. Second, the search and selection process was documented in order to improve the transparency of the analytical pathway. Third, interpretations were not limited to a single statement or taken of context but were continually weighed against the original texts.

To be trustworthy, a thematic analysis should present a sufficiently clear and systematic account of how data are moved from initial coding to a final set of themes (Nowell et al., 2017). As a result, efforts were made to ensure consistency in the research questions, the selection of sources, the coding procedure, the development of the themes, and the interpretation of the results. The contradictory evidence was not intentionally omitted, but rather the disagreements within the literature were kept in place because they helped to elucidate the complexity of AI and international security. This makes the results more believable as it does not present just one pre-determined interpretation of the results.

Ethical Considerations

The study does not contain any direct risks as it is based on publicly accessible academic publications and historical documents without the participation of human subjects. However, it is still important to have ethical research practices. Sources were accurately identified, arguments interpreted accurately and appropriately, and APA 7th edition cited. The study does not seek access to unpublicized interviews, confidential documents, proprietary data and information, or original field evidence. Every effort was made to maintain a disinterested voice in the interpretations that reflect the views of source authors, and those reflecting the analytical interpretations of the researcher.

Methodological Limitations

The Documentary qualitative design has a number of drawbacks. First, its results are based on the availability, accessibility and quality of literature and institutional documents available. There is also some strategic or military information that can only be found in parts in the public domain, so that only a part of the national AI capabilities can be gleaned from public sources. Second, the evolving character of AI can lead to a fast evolution of evidence and positions on policy, which may result in some interpretations being time-sensitive. Third, documentary analysis can't determine direct causal relations between the development of AI and security change in the international order. It, instead, is meant to decipher patterns, meaning, relations, and discerning tendencies in the evidence at hand.

Last, the interpretation of the data in the interpretivist analysis process cannot be separated from the judgment of the researchers. Systematic procedures and source triangulation were employed to enhance credibility, but the themes should not be considered as the only interpretation of the material. The methodological purpose is not to make generalisations, but to gain analytical understanding. In this space, the documentary and thematic approach is an appropriate way to explore the extent to which AI is entering into the current structures of geopolitical rivalry, technological strength, military change, cybersecurity, reliance on supply chains, and global governance.

Findings and Discussion

The document examination revealed seven related themes that shed light on the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in shaping global power dynamics, geopolitical rivalry, military dynamics, cybersecurity, technological supply chains, international governance and states' security standing in the Global South. This study is an interpretivist, qualitative study, so these findings should be viewed as patterns of meaning and interpretation that are found among the academic literature, policy documents, strategic assessments and international debates that are examined. The analysis does not imply, however, that AI itself is enough to decide the course of international politics. Rather, it suggests that AI is becoming integrated into the prevailing power dynamics and that it is reshaping conceptions of security, technological autonomy, strategic interest and international order by states and other actors.

One of the most noteworthy insights comes from the fact that the geopolitical implications of AI are not just about algorithms. It builds upon the interplay of AI technologies and broader systems of computing infrastructure, semiconductor manufacturing, data, finance, research institutes, military agencies, regulatory bodies, and international partnerships. The documentary evidence then leads to a conclusion that power is being gradually rearranged in the world, not one great, sudden technological shift. AI seems to be exacerbating some of the existing inequalities and also introducing new divides between states and organisations who can change their institutions and strategies to benefit from AI, and those who cannot.

Theme 1: AI and the Redistribution of Global Power

Interpreted finding

The first theme is that AI is becoming more and more a part of a nation's and geopolitical strength. In the literature and policy analysis reviewed, technological capability is consistently linked with economic competitiveness, military power and effectiveness, capacity for intelligence, innovation, and influence over international standards. But the analysis also implies that there are multiple dimensions to AI power. It requires more than just the possession of sophisticated AI models, but the availability of computing power, quality data, human resources, semiconductor technologies, research environments, capital and institutions.

The result raises doubts about the notion of viewing AI as a revolutionary force. Instead, the documentary material depicts AI as an enhancement of current abilities. Technological ecosystems are more apt to leverage AI advances for strategic gains, whereas weaker technological ecosystems may continue to rely on external providers. Thus, the distribution of AI power seems to have been unevenly spread, not universal.

An important difference was also found between technological ability and strategic influence. A nation with powerful AI technologies doesn't have to have a strong global footing. Technological capabilities are a key determinant of strategic influence if they can be integrated into the economic, diplomatic, military and institutional systems. This implies that AI does not take the place of traditional sources of power, but rather reshapes the power dynamics.

Discussion

Overall, this discovery resonates with previous research that frames AI as a general-purpose technology with potential effects on military and economic competition, while highlighting how the impacts of AI rely on institutional and strategic environments (Johnson, 2019). The discovery can be understood in the light of a modified view of material power from an international-relations point of view. As with classical realism, a key aspect of the distribution of capabilities of states is also emphasized in AI, but much of the relevant infrastructure is privately owned or transnational.

Technological power is then increasingly linked together in the documentary analysis and thus is interpreted in this way. AI capabilities are strategically significant in the hands of semiconductor companies, cloud providers, research universities, software businesses, data centers, and governments, among others, and form the ecosystem that makes them so. This is significant because a state-centric perception of international power is a complicated one.

The results also align with the arguments about AI nationalism. Goode (2021) demonstrates the link between AI and national technological dreams and state identity. The development of AI is now shifting from seeing it as just an economic activity to a concern around sovereignty and national security. This discursive move is significant as it alters the political connotations of technological dependency. The reliance on AI services from other countries can increasingly be viewed as a strategic vulnerability, not just an economic one.

One unexpected finding from the analysis is that it is possible for AI to reshape power dynamics while not shrinking the power disparities that currently exist. It is frequently described as a "democratizing" technology since software and information can spread quickly. However, building the advanced AI tools is a significant investment of computational, monetary, and institutional resources. It could be a paradox where the use of AI is more accessible at a layered application level, but far more focused at the infrastructure level.

Such this distinction is especially important in the field of international security. For strategic AI capabilities, it will come down to infrastructure control as much as it will come down to control over weapons and territory if they require focused technological resources. It is, therefore, possible that the new world order will be created by a mix of conventional military power and technological ecosystem power.

Theme 2: US-China Technological Competition and the Establishment of Strategic Blocs

Interpreted finding

The second theme is the growing entanglements between US-China geopolitical competition and AI development. The documentary analysis always frames AI as a larger battle between high-tech semiconductors, super-computers, military modernization, digital platforms, research power and technological benchmarks. The analysis, however, does not lend itself to a simple reading of the relationship as a "race for the AI."

Rather, the evidence points to a more complex process of selective technological decoupling and ongoing interdependency. Both states want to decrease strategic vulnerability, but complete technological separation is not easy given the global

production networks. As a result, competition is taking place through export controls, industrial policy, investment restrictions, through research strategies, domestic innovation programs and through securing critical supply chains.

Discussion

This discovery aligns with the research that has been conducted on the technology becoming an ever growing aspect of modern competition between the United States and China. In the case of semiconductors, for example, commercial technologies have become strategic due to their importance in the development of AI. Hah (2025) emphasizes the geopolitical significance of semiconductors and the strategic implications of its regionalized supply chains.

The historical record shows that the competition language of technology can shape international relations. If the use of AI is perceived as a competition for technological dominance, then technological progress in the home country is linked to national security. This type of framing can strengthen competitive interaction even when it may have positive outcomes for both parties. This is the principle of the security dilemma: defensive measures seen by one state may be seen by another as preparations for strategic gain.

But, there is a contradiction in the “race” story as well. The technological ecosystem is still worldwide. International research, specialized equipment, multinational supply chains and global markets are essential to the development of advanced AI. Thus, when striving for technological independence, new dependencies may be created elsewhere. The emerging order is therefore not so much a state of complete decoupling as a state of managed interdependence.

This discovery has implications for theories of globalization and international political economy. Geopolitical competition seems to be reconfiguring globalization, not turning it back, but reshaping it. Strategic technologies are becoming more distinct from the notion that efficiency of any kind is a preeminent national security concern. Economic costs are being traded for greater technological resilience by government.

The analysis also shows that the U.S.-China competition has a normative aspect. It's not just a competition for who creates superior AI systems, but for which regulatory frameworks, technological specifications, and governance structures become global standards. It's a race not only on the development of more powerful AI systems but also on the global influence of regulatory frameworks, technological standards, and governance models. AI is thus part of a broader struggle for control over the rules and institutions that regulate digital technologies.

But the documents do not warrant the view of inevitable bipolarity in the future world order. Technologically capable and/or strategically important states, such as Europe, Japan, South Korea, India and others, have opportunities to influence technological governance and supply chains. Middle powers will have to look to strategic autonomy instead of a complete alignment with either of the big powers. This means that AI could create a multipolar technological order instead of just bipolar.

Theme 3: Military AI and the Transformation of Autonomous Warfare

Interpreted finding

The third theme illustrates that AI is revolutionizing military affairs most for improved information processing, surveillance and targeting, decision support, logistics, and autonomous systems. The analysis does not suggest that there is a direct substitution taking place of human soldiers with machines. Rather the more important shift relates to the growing use of algorithmic systems in military decision-making.

The documentary evidence keeps coming up with concerns about speed, accountability, predictability and human control. With increased speeds that AI-powered systems can achieve, not only can military organizations process information quicker than humans but they can also allow for less time for human judgment. This leaves a conflict with effective operation and effective decision-making.

Discussion

The discovery backs up a Johnson (2019) theory that AI could impact military competition in several ways. But, the documentary analysis indicates that the key issue is not the technological autonomy itself, but the changing attitude of human and technological systems.

The discussion on lethal autonomous weapons is a good example of this. Previous scholarship has highlighted the important debate regarding the level of autonomy that should be allowed and adequate human control. States have yet to achieve consensus on the prohibition, regulation, and/or discussion of autonomous weapons under the current international

humanitarian law. Disagreements about the necessity of war, morality, responsibility and strategic security lie beneath the surface.

Blauth (2023) asks whether meaningful human control is enough to deal with the complexity of autonomous weapons while McFarland and Assaad (2023) warn of challenges arising from the autonomous learning and behaviour of systems after deployment. The current discovery is that the military use of AI is not merely a technical problem, an issue that is supported by these debates. It is essentially a matter of accountability and accountability.

The document analysis also uncovers an unanticipated opportunity: that AI might be able to enhance the accuracy and the uncertainty. More complex systems can have better target identification or decision support, but can also be more complicated to understand why a system made a certain recommendation. Therefore the strategic certainty does not necessarily follow the technological sophistication.

In a constructivist or interpretivist framework, military autonomy ought to be interpreted in relation to the norms that regulates legitimate military acts. For one military unit, automation is a good thing; for another, it's a bad thing—and a dangerous one at that. Thus, autonomy is a socially and politically negotiated concept.

The overall message is that military AI could change not just how the war is fought but how it is fought. The big question now is what should AI decide, rather than what can AI do.

Theme 4: AI-driven Cyber and Information Security Threats

Interpreted finding

The fourth theme is related to the dual-use aspects of AI in the cyber and information space. By leveraging automated detection, anomaly identification, threat analysis, and rapid response, AI can bolster defensive cybersecurity, as the documentary analysis shows. At the same time, it can help bad actors to make cyber operations faster, more extensive and more sophisticated.

So it is a key finding that AI is not a new breed of cyber insecurity. Instead, it enhances capabilities that are already available, making them more accessible and faster. AI can improve the efficiency of exploiting traditional vulnerabilities, which are still crucial.

Discussion

The discovery matches with studies that have characterized AI as a 'defensive and offensive cybersecurity tool'. Evidence gathered in recent years indicates that the security aspect of AI is highly context-dependent, and that the role of AI in security is closely tied to the dynamics of automation, cyber risks, geopolitical concerns and institutional readiness.

The analysis also shows that there is a strong linkage between information security as a topic and the rest of geopolitical rivalry. Affecting public trust and political stability without necessarily using traditional military means: AI-generated content, automated influence operations, synthetic media and targeted information campaigns. In a recent study on AI and information warfare in major powers, Hennig et al. (2024) provide an example of how states use AI in broader strategic communication and influence operations.

This discovery broadens the notion of international security. In addition to physical territorial protection, the integrity of information environments and decision-making processes is becoming an increasing concern of security. The strategic vulnerability can be at the social trust level if citizens and institutions are not able to reliably identify authentic information from AI-generated information.

However, the documentary analysis raises the red flag of technologism. Frequent cause of cybersecurity failures is weak institutional structures, bad security practices, dated infrastructure, or weak governance. AI can exacerbate these risks and vulnerabilities without taking them away.

Such an important contradiction thus arises. The ability of AI to enhance national security by bolstering defense capabilities could also contribute to making it easier for attackers to launch high-tech attacks. AI's ability to help countries strengthen their defenses can also make it easier for attackers to mount high-tech attacks. This is an old-fashioned "dual use" scenario that becomes increasingly complicated as AI becomes more ubiquitous and accessible.

The interpretivist approach further emphasizes the relevance of perception. AI-infused cyber capabilities that a state develops can be seen as defensive modernization within the country, but as preparation for offensive activities by the outside world. Vagueness in these terms can add to security dilemmas and to mistrust.

Theme 5: Semiconductor, data, computing infrastructure and technology supply chains.

Interpreted finding

One theme that stood out in the documents and was especially strong was that the strategic relevance of AI is now becoming reliant on the physical infrastructure backing it. The material bases of AI power are semiconductors, advanced processors, cloud computing, energy, telecommunication systems, specialized manufacturing equipment, and expertise.

The analysis suggests that as a result, states are starting to view technological supply chains as security assets. Relying on foreign suppliers is being viewed more as a potential vulnerability, leading to policies that seek to diversify or ensure that critical technologies are available domestically.

Discussion

This discovery is consistent with the literature on geopolitics of semiconductor supply chains. At the same time, Hah (2025) illustrates strategic weaknesses of the global economy that are brought about by the concentration of semiconductor manufacturing. That means the importance of semiconductors goes beyond commercial markets as advanced computing is a key component of the development of AI.

The documentation indicates a more general shift in the understanding of economic interdependence. Historically, interdependence was linked to gains for both parties, specialization and efficiency. However, more often than not, states are evaluating interdependence in terms of resilience and security.

This establishes a basic conflict. Making efforts to acquire domestic technological capabilities can help build resilience, but may also drive up costs and localise global markets. It is hard to achieve complete self-sufficiency due to the spread of the AI system across various countries. A state can own the design of the chip and use foreign manufacturing equipment or a state can have manufacturing equipment and rely on foreign software or intellectual property.

The discovery thus implies that in the future, strategic control over bottlenecks may be more important than the total independence of the technology. Even if the state is not leading the pack in the AI sector, they might have a disproportionate influence if they play a key role in supply chains.

A second dimension is added by data and computing infrastructure. The availability of large datasets and high performance computing can have an impact on research and deployment capabilities, but these benefits rely on governance, the institutional expertise, and technological infrastructure. The AI divide is therefore a data divide, infrastructure divide, skills divide and investment divide.

The discovery has been important in developing countries. Technological dependencies can lead to vulnerabilities which may not be apparent in conventional security analysis. A state can be politically sovereign, but with a very strong reliance on foreign digital infrastructure. This implies that technological sovereignty is fast becoming an integral and growing part of the modern national security.

This theme explores the governance and international strategic fragmentation of AI. The theme investigates the governance and international strategic fragmentation of AI.

Interpreted finding

The sixth theme is on fragmented AI governance. From the documentary analysis, the principle of safety, the principle of accountability, the principle of transparency, the principle of human control, the principle of data protection, and the principle of responsible AI are areas where increasing efforts are being made to set some principles. But governance is spread between national legislation, regional institutions, international organisations, industry initiatives and voluntary standards.

The evidence thus indicates a rather disorganized governance system—one that does not seem to be a global system of governance for AI. There's a growing consensus among states that AI needs to be governed, but not on how, how much, or how it interacts with innovation and security.

Discussion

This discovery aligns with the theory's development by Lundgren (2023) that AI governance is an emerging but fragmented field in international relations. The same goes for global AI governance, which is also defined by Roberts et al. (2024) as a regime complex made up of several interlocking institutions and actors.

From a documentary perspective, it is suggested that fragmentation is to some extent structural. AI transcends borders whereas laws are largely state-bound. The legal realm is largely territorial and AI is transnational. Technological companies are global but governments have jurisdiction over their own respective fields. This leaves a gap between the governance of the international system and the transnational nature of AI.

The autonomous-weapons debate is an example of this. There are disagreements among states regarding how autonomous they should be and what regulations are needed. This is the same with the wider landscape of AI governance, as countries take a different approach to technological innovation and economic competitiveness, privacy, national security, and human rights.

The analysis highlights an interesting paradox: while geopolitical dynamics serve as a motivation to govern AI, international cooperation is also hindered. States acknowledge that there are risks common to all, but are also concerned that regulation might make them less competitive than unregulated competitors.

This tension can be a contributing factor in strategic fragmentation. Technological ecosystems can evolve to have varying standards, expectations and security practices. This fragmentation may create hurdles to cooperation and incentivize states to technology match with geopolitical groups.

There should be no implication that fragmentation is a sign of total failure in governance, however. Norm development can sometimes take place as a consequence of multiple overlapping institutions. International norms are not always negotiated through one agreement, but are often negotiated over time. It may be more realistic to think of gradual building-up of principles, standards and practices.

This process is particularly important from an interpretivist viewpoint because norms are a product of interaction and contestation. AI governance is not just about rules, it's also a process of negotiations over what is responsible and appropriate technological practice.

Theme 7: International Security and Global South.

Interpreted finding

The seventh theme has focused on the global South's disproportionate impact on AI. The documentary analysis shows that, in states like the USA with less technological infrastructure, AI will be experienced mostly by relying on external technologies, platforms, cloud services, cyber security systems and regulatory models. Meanwhile, these states continue to face a number of AI security challenges.

The findings do not align with the easy story of the "Global South" as a "technologically powerless" region. Instead, they highlight limited autonomy. The differences in infrastructure, investment, technical expertise, and bargaining power influence states' choices of national AI strategies, involvement in international negotiations, regulatory policies, and regional partnerships.

Discussion

The discovery continues the prevailing trend in AI security research, which has been dominated by the great powers. Overshadowed by the focus on the United States, China, and other high-technology economies, much existing literature focuses on these areas. However, the effects of AI will be global as well, and those of less technologically advanced states will be crucial.

The latest research on AI inequality has highlighted the unequal distribution of AI capabilities globally and the potential challenges that developing nations could face in terms of acquiring the necessary computational power, technology, and institutional expertise to develop AI systems independently. These differences offer the potential for a new type of technological dependency.

The security aspect is important. Foreign dependent states could have concerns regarding data sovereignty, cybersecurity, technological reliability and strategic autonomy. Additionally, imported AI systems can also contain assumptions and/or data sets that do not fully align with local social and political realities.

The analysis does point to an important area of agency, however. Global South states can prevent being forced to choose between dependence and isolation through selective partnerships, regional cooperation, open-source technologies, human capital investment and involvement in international AI governance.

The discovery also undermines the idea that technological power equals technological production. Even if states are not directly involved in the creation of frontier AI systems, they have the ability to exercise influence via regulatory diplomacy, coalition building, standard setting, and strategic adoption.

In terms of international security, that translates into a less equal order in the future unless the technological capabilities become more evenly distributed, but it does not necessarily mean that the weaker states will be passive. The extent to which they influence the new order will rely more and more on coordination within institutions and on strategic decisions of policies.

Integrated Discussion: What Do the Themes Reveal About the Changing Global Order?

The seven themes suggest that AI is reshaping rather than supplanting the international order. Three patterns are especially significant interconnected patterns.

First, AI is increasingly becoming part of the traditional power bases of states. The country's military power, economic power, diplomatic clout, and technological prowess are increasingly strengthening each other. Traditional capabilities are not made redundant by AI – they are transformed.

Second, the emergence of technological competition is causing concentration and fragmentation. The nation's advanced computing, semiconductors, and research continue to be dominated by a relatively small number of states and companies. Meanwhile, geopolitical rivalry is breaking up technology ecosystems by imposing export restrictions, industrial policies, competing standards and strategic partnerships. A paradoxical world emerges of a concentrated technological power and simultaneously a politically fragmented technological system.

Thirdly, AI is contributing to a growing dynamic of dependence and independence. Despite the reliance on global markets and technological networks, some states view some forms of dependence as threats to security. This does not indicate the end of globalization. Rather, it is directed toward a more selective globalization that results in different governance of strategic technologies than commercial goods.

Another takeaway from the analysis is that AI security isn't just about military uses. Cybersecurity, information integrity, semiconductor access, data governance, technological infrastructure and regulatory institutions are becoming increasingly intertwined. Reduced stability in one area can impact other areas. For instance, advanced computing limitations may affect the growth of AI that might impact cyber capabilities and military modernization. Increasingly, the changing security environment is a security environment where interdependence occurs across domains.

An AI arms race is also not an inevitability, as the analysis suggests. While the technical opportunity is important, strategic results are shaped by political decisions, institutional adjustments, economic means and international standards. AI can open up new avenues for competition, but it does not prescribe that states go into battle or engage in a competitive spirit.

This is likely one of the most important findings from the interpretivist point of view. Technological power is not the only factor that will define the future of AI and international security; it will also be defined by the sense surrounding the technology. When states see AI as a strategic game of "one upmanship," technology could exacerbate competition. If they see some of the risks with AI as security issues, then there may be more opportunities for cooperation.

Theoretical vs. Practical Significance

The outcomes offer a theoretical contribution by showing how to go beyond the technological determinism of thinking about AI and to understand it from an interpretive power perspective of international relations. AI is not just another tool in the State's kit, it's a redefinition of sovereignty, strategic autonomy, security, and technological dependence. The analysis also indicates that the traditional realist paradigm of power is still valid but needs to be expanded to incorporate private technological actors, infrastructure dependencies, data, computing resources and global supply chains.

Overall, the results are important for international-security scholarship because they link the military use of AI to economic security, cybersecurity, governance, and technological inequality. They are usually treated in isolation, but the records show that they are becoming a part of a new strategy environment.

The results imply, practically, that governments must not consider AI policy as an innovation or technology-policy problem. The use of computing infrastructure, semiconductor supply chains, cybersecurity, data governance, military doctrine, human oversight in practice, and international cooperation must all be taken into account within a national security strategy. International institutions must also have systems in place that are both accommodating to technological competition and maintain communication on shared threats.

The results highlight the need for technological capacity building, regional collaboration, the creation of digital infrastructure, cybersecurity readiness, and effective engagement in global AI governance for the Global South. International AI governance will not be complete if developing nations are considered as recipients of rules being created in another part of the world.

The report concludes with the findings and discussion

In general, the documentary analysis illustrates that AI is a growing part of the evolving global order, yet this impact is not inevitable nor predictable across situations. The seven themes demonstrate a gradual realignment of world power as the basis of technological capability, geopolitical competition, military adaptation, cyber and information security, critical infrastructure, governance and unequal access to technological resources.

The most salient takeaway is that AI is not just a technological revolution but an integral part of a broader shift in the dynamics of global power. The new order involves simultaneously competing and interdependent powers, technological centralisation and disintegration, innovation and uncertainty, and internationalisation and autonomy.

The results thus indicate that international security is not only going to be influenced by who will have the most advanced AI but also who will control the infrastructures which enable it, who will set norms for its use, who will be able to resist its security threats and who will have enough institutional capacity to influence its development. This broader understanding of the geopolitical relevance of AI can help inform an understanding of how international actors could navigate an increasingly technologically driven global order.

Conclusion

AI has become more than a technological advancement; it is a significant factor in geopolitical power, strategic competition, and evolving international security dynamics. This qualitative study analyzed that transformation from an interpretivist viewpoint, taking into account the meaning and positioning of AI in current power dynamics, in both the US and China, military transformation, cyber and information security, technological supply chains, international governance, and the Global South. The study did not presume that technological development is inherently geopolitical, but rather that AI is a socially, politically, and institutionally-embedded capability that only becomes meaningful when viewed through the lens of how states and other actors interpret, use, regulate, and contest it.

The analysis filled in an important void in existing scholarship. Much of the literature looks at the development of AI from a military perspective, a cybersecurity perspective, a technological competition perspective, a semiconductor politics perspective, or a governance perspective, but comparatively little focus has been paid to the interaction of these developments and how they are changing international order. The present study combined these dimensions by using documentary approach of qualitative analysis. This leads to an interpretation of the role of AI as a gradual re-distribution and reorganisation of power, but not as a substitute for the current international order. What makes it important is that it is a learned skill that integrates the elements of the economy, military, information and technology.

One of the major findings is that AI is transforming the nature of global power and its sources. Advanced algorithms alone do not constitute geopolitical strength. They are strategically important because of computing power, semiconductors, data, energy, human resources, universities and research institutes, investment, and digital infrastructure. It is not only that the power of AI is now spread throughout technological ecosystems including both government and the private sector, but that this is a reality rather than a future prospect. The traditional, state-centric definition of power is thus still valid, but needs to be extended to encompass technological infrastructures and non-state actors.

The study also shows how technological competition between the United States and China is playing a significant role in shaping international relations in the era of AI. The development of AI is more and more linked to the development of semiconductor controls, industrial policies, technological standards, military modernization and strategic autonomy. However, the analysis fails to lend credence to the notion of a simple race for technology. Interdependence of global technology networks is an ongoing process that enables competition and cooperation to exist. A new environment is characterized by more selective decoupling, more managed interdependence, and greater technological fragmentation. This finding is consistent with research showing the growing geopolitical importance of semiconductor supply chains and technological sovereignty (Hah, 2025).

The other key aspect of this shift is military AI. The research revealed that while the idea of fully autonomous weapons is perhaps the most discussed aspect of AI in warfare, there are other areas of significance. AI is becoming more and more applicable to intelligence, surveillance, targeting, logistics, decision and command and control. Rather than asking whether machines are going to take over humans, it's more important to ask what will happen to the relationship between human judgment and algorithmic decision-making. The issue of meaningful human control and autonomous weapons has been a

topic of debate that has existed long before the development of these technologies, and it is not only a technological or legal, but also an ethical and political (Blauth, 2023; McFarland & Assaad, 2023). Technological advancements, then, are not the only factor in shaping the future of military AI, as other norms and institutional practices will also influence its development.

The results also show that there is a growing convergence of cybersecurity and information security with AI. AI can bolster defensive measures and also facilitate advanced attacks. Such a dual-use nature implies an ongoing security dilemma, as technology created for defense is also able to be turned to offensive uses. Importantly, the study does not consider that AI is simply generating new cyber threats. Instead, it points to AI's potential to amplify and expand upon vulnerabilities that already exist, as well as new ones that relate to information integrity, automated attacks, and trust.

Another key finding regards technological infrastructure. The future of AI is not just about software innovation, as the strategic value of semiconductors, data, computing power, cloud systems, and supply chains make themselves abundantly clear. The mastery of key technological sticking points is becoming more tied to national security and geopolitical power. This progression has consequences for the broader international political economy as the push to lessen dependency on technology can also create greater resilience, but at the same time increase new forms of fragmentation and economic costs.

The study also draws attention to the disjointed nature of AI governance. While there are growing calls for international norms and principles of good use of AI, the interests and focus of states vary widely. AI governance is therefore emerging in a multi-layered, national, regional, international and private framework instead of as a single global framework. Lundgren (2023) and Roberts et al. (2024) also highlight the ambiguity of emerging international governance of AI. It is crucial that this fragmentation is of particular importance because AI is a technology that operates across borders, whereas international regulation is mainly state-focused.

This underscores vulnerabilities as well as opportunities for the Global South. Limited access to advanced computing, semiconductor technologies, investment and technical expertise could result in growing technological dependence for countries. However, dependence is not synonymous with total helplessness. The developing States have the ability to assert their agency in the following ways: Regional cooperation; Strategic partnerships; Training the human workforce; Investment in digital infrastructure; Involvement in international AI governance. Inclusive global AI order thus needs to be paid attention to, beyond only a great power contest.

From a theoretical standpoint, the study adds to the literature by providing a good illustration of the utility of an interpretivist study of AI and international security. The analysis takes an interdisciplinary perspective, instead of viewing AI as a standalone causal phenomenon, it highlights the geopolitical construction of AI meaning as a result of strategic narratives, institutional practices, security perceptions and international norms. This angle adds to the more common technology-as-power perspective, and demonstrates that technology abilities are not simply an outsized political consequence of technology, but are also an interpretative and institutional one.

In practical terms, the results point to the need for a cautious approach by policy makers on their handling of AI as a narrow innovation-policy issue. The application of AI must be part of a national security strategy, in addition to semiconductor resilience, cybersecurity, data governance, technological supply chains, military doctrine, and international cooperation. International institutions should also expand discussions of common dangers of AI and acknowledge the geopolitical challenges that prevent agreement.

There are limitations to the study. It is a documentary and qualitative design which gives interpretations, but does not set up statistical causal relationships. The analysis is also reliant on the availability, quality and perspectives of existing academic and policy documents. Moreover, the evolution of AI is progressing at a rapid rate, and the situation could shift quicker than academic research can track. Comparative country studies, additional analyses of perspectives from other Global South states, analysis of changing AI governance regimes, and analysis of the incorporation of AI in specific military and cyber institutions could be part of future research activities.

The study concludes that AI must not be interpreted as a force acting independently and shaping world politics, or as a more technological tool. It is becoming more and more an infrastructure where power is exercised, security is being known and where international competition is being organized. The global order of the future will thus rely not just on which nation or group of nations develops sophisticated AI but on which nation or group of nations controls the infrastructures behind it, sets the norms governing its use, governs its security risks, and has effective influence over its international utilization. In order to grasp the future of international security and the ongoing evolution of the global order, it is necessary to grasp these relationships.

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