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Digital Diplomacy and Smart Militarism: The Contradictory Implications of Artificial Intelligence on Peace and Regional Security in the Middle East

Atefeh Shahsavari [1] | Rahman Hariri [2] | Forouan Marzbani [3]

Abstract

Introduction

In the twenty-first century, artificial intelligence (AI) as one of the transformative technologies has had a profound impact on international relations, diplomacy, and security. This technology, on one hand, creates the ground for advancing digital diplomacy, and on the other hand, through militarization, brings threats to global order and stability. The military use of artificial intelligence has transformed war and introduced autonomous weapons, logistics optimization, and informational and surveillance technologies. The implications of militarization are multifaceted and highlight risks such as arms races and ethical concerns. The development of artificial intelligence for lethal purposes changes the nature of war and the enforcement of international laws, creating fundamental problems for the stability of the international system. On the other hand, artificial intelligence has transformed digital diplomacy. Artificial intelligence is an essential tool for crisis management, negotiations, and crisis prediction. However, there is a significant paradox between digital diplomacy (which provides opportunities for peace) and smart militarism (such as autonomous weapons and cyber warfare) that affects these two domains. This paradox is prominent in the Middle East region, with its geopolitical complexities and ongoing tensions. In this region, digital diplomacy has created opportunities for big data analysis and negotiation management that can help peace, but smart militarism has created threats to regional security and increased arms races. Following the advancement of artificial intelligence in international relations, the present research seeks to

1. PhD student in Political Sociology, Department of Political Science and International Relations, Razi University, Kermanshah, Iran. E-mail: at.shahsavari@gmail.com
2. Corresponding Author: Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science and International Relations, Faculty of Social Sciences, Razi University. E-mail: r.hariri@razi.ac.ir
3. PhD student in Political Sociology, Department of Political Science and International Relations, Razi University, Kermanshah, Iran. E-mail:forozanmarzbany1376@gmail.com

DOR: 00000000000000000000

answer this main question: What impact has the expansion of artificial intelligence had and will have on the balance of war and peace in the Middle East region? Therefore, the present research, by examining the opportunities and threats of artificial intelligence, helps to understand the duality of this technology in the Middle East.

Methodology

This research, in terms of nature, is among theoretical studies, and in terms of methodology, based on the type of data, it is qualitative of the descriptive-analytical type. Based on the type of objective, it is a combination of fundamental and applied types. In this research, documentary and library methods were used for data collection. Information gathering was focused on scientific-research sources including articles, books, and reports from reputable international and domestic institutions. Since the research focuses on examining the paradoxical implications of artificial intelligence on peace and regional security in the Middle East, its geographical scope is the countries of the Middle East region; because these countries show the highest application of artificial intelligence in conflicts. The time scope is 2020-2025, a period that has witnessed the expansion of artificial intelligence in conflicts (such as the Gaza war, Hamas, and the 12-day war between Israel and Iran).

Result and discussion

For the theoretical framework of the research, cyber diplomacy has been used, which includes soft power (digital diplomacy) and hard power (smart militarism). This framework shows the interaction between power domains (soft, hard) and military, informational, and inter-country roles. Artificial intelligence in this framework provides tools for data analysis and crisis prediction, but without cyber diplomacy, it may lead toward war.

In the digital diplomacy section, artificial intelligence has made communications faster and more transparent, but it comes with risks such as cyber attacks and digital inequality. And in this article, the positive and negative aspects are shown, where advantages like improved communications and transparency are accompanied by risks such as misinformation and cyber espionage. Therefore, in the Middle East, this diplomacy can exacerbate inequalities.

In smart militarism, artificial intelligence has been integrated into military equipment, and countries like Iran, Israel, and Turkey

have benefited from this technology in artificial intelligence arms races. Examples include Iranian drones equipped with artificial intelligence (such as Shahed 136) and Israeli systems (such as Lavender for facial recognition). Therefore, artificial intelligence changes the face of war and increases arms races, also challenging international law.

The article addresses the positive and negative implications of artificial intelligence on peace and security; positive implications such as early warnings, prevention of conflicts, support for mediation, and humanitarian aid. This technology can strengthen peace but has challenges such as the growth of autonomous weapons. And negative implications for security include cyber attacks, deepfakes, fraud, algorithmic bias, inauthentic behavior, and disruption of infrastructures. In the Middle East, these threats intensify tensions and lead to increased arms races.

Also, the challenges of artificial intelligence include regional conflicts that disrupt supply chains, increased political tensions, technical limitations (incomplete data), and ethical issues. In this regard, a series of solutions such as setting ethical principles, increasing awareness, technological diplomacy, and regional standards have been presented.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Artificial intelligence has a dual impact; this innovative technology, in addition to the opportunities arising from it for improving peace and regional cooperation, brings serious threats including military use and uncontrollable autonomous weapons. Therefore, it can be said that artificial intelligence in the Middle East is neither inherently peace-creating nor inherently war-causing. Therefore, in this region, coordinated policies (such as the existence of a regional institution for arms control) can turn threats into opportunities, hence the impact of artificial intelligence on digital diplomacy and smart militarism has led to paradoxical implications for peace and security in the Middle East. While it is said that artificial intelligence will mostly cause regional instability, the fact that this technology can have a positive impact on regional security should not be completely ignored. Therefore, although artificial intelligence can help advance negotiations and military efficiency, one should not overlook its ethical, legal, and operational risks. To benefit from the advantages of digital diplomacy and contain the threats and dangers of smart militarism, it is necessary to employ smart, transparent, and multi-level governance. Therefore, exploiting the positive aspects and

reducing the negative implications of artificial intelligence depends on the governments' approach.

And finally, it is suggested that countries develop their national strategies and policies for governance over artificial intelligence, such as its integration into military and security domains. This will allow countries to express their priorities and objectives; also, given the gap between countries in the field of emerging technologies, capacity-building efforts can be carried out at the national level so that they can perform successfully in the field of artificial intelligence in the future; in this regard, countries can engage in increasing public awareness and education about artificial intelligence. And finally, it is suggested to adopt new arrangements for creating an international institution related to governance over artificial intelligence.

Keywords: : Artificial Intelligence, Digital Diplomacy, Smart Militarization, Regional Peace and Security, Middle East

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