



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TECHNOLOGIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL ORDER: A NEW PARADIGM OF GEOPOLITICAL COMPETITION

Sobirjonova Saida Sarvar qizi

Uzbekistan State World Languages University,

Faculty of International Journalism,

2nd-year student of International Relations,

Phone: +998 94 944 8983,

sobirjonovasaida73@gmail.com

Abstract. *This article analyzes the growing role of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies as a key instrument of global geopolitical competition. It comparatively examines the AI strategies of the United States, China, and the European Union, focusing on export control mechanisms, digital infrastructure, and regulatory approaches. The study demonstrates that AI models, data centers, and technological standards have evolved beyond purely economic tools and are increasingly becoming geopolitical assets that shape the international order. The article argues that the state capable of expanding its AI ecosystem on a global scale will play a decisive role in defining the norms and rules of 21st-century international relations.*

Keywords: *Artificial intelligence (AI), geopolitics, digital economy, export control mechanisms, the Brussels Effect, DeepSeek, global fragmentation*

Introduction.

Artificial Intelligence as a New Strategic Resource.

In the mid-twentieth century, the power that controlled oil largely determined the trajectory of the global economy. Today, however, the struggle for strategic dominance revolves around a different resource—data and the capacity to process it, namely artificial intelligence (AI) technologies. This transformation has elevated AI to a position of critical importance in terms of national security, economic efficiency, and international competition.



Over the past decade, artificial intelligence has moved beyond the confines of research laboratories and become a foundational component of real-world economic and military systems. Sectors such as logistics, finance, healthcare, and the defense industry are now deeply integrated with AI-driven models. This rapid integration raises a set of pressing geopolitical questions: Who develops AI technologies? Who distributes them? And, most importantly, who controls their diffusion?

This article provides a comparative analysis of the AI strategies of three major global actors—the United States, China, and the European Union—and examines their implications for international relations. The analysis suggests that AI technologies increasingly reflect the concept of “weaponized interdependence,” as developed by Henry Farrell and Abraham Newman, representing a new form of power in the contemporary international system.

Literature Review

The relationship between artificial intelligence (AI) and the international order has been widely discussed in recent literature, focusing on regulatory power, technological competition, and global governance.

Bradford (2020) argues that the European Union exerts global influence through regulatory frameworks, known as the “Brussels Effect,” which is particularly relevant in the governance of digital technologies and AI. This highlights the importance of norm-setting power in the digital era.[1].

In contrast, Drezner (2021) emphasizes the resilience of the international order, while Farrell and Newman (2019) introduce the concept of “weaponized interdependence,” explaining how states can use global networks such as data flows and technological supply chains for geopolitical advantage.[2],[3].

The strategic rivalry between the United States and China is central in AI studies. Kania (2021) and Lee (2018) describe AI as a key arena of competition between these powers, shaped by different innovation models and state involvement. [4],[5]. Khan (2023) further highlights China’s vulnerabilities in semiconductor supply chains, which remain a critical factor in technological competition.[6].



Roberts et al. (2021) analyze China's AI governance approach, showing how state policy integrates innovation with regulatory control.[7]. Meanwhile, Summers (2023) discusses concerns over declining U.S. technological leadership, and Zysman and Tyson (1983) provide a foundational perspective on government roles in international economic competitiveness.[8],[9].

Despite these contributions, there is still a need for a comparative analysis of how major actors integrate AI into their geopolitical strategies. This study addresses this gap by focusing on the United States, China, and the European Union.

Methodology.

This study adopts a qualitative comparative research design to investigate the role of artificial intelligence (AI) as an emerging instrument of geopolitical competition in the contemporary international system. The research focuses on two major global actors—the United States and China—in order to examine how their respective AI strategies, regulatory frameworks, and technological capabilities contribute to shifts in global power structures.

The study is based on qualitative document analysis as its primary methodological tool. This includes an extensive review of official government policy documents, national AI development strategies, export control regulations, academic publications, and analytical reports produced by international organizations and leading research centers in the field of technology and security studies. The selection of sources is guided by relevance to AI governance, technological competition, and international political economy.

In the case of the United States, the study analyzes export control policies implemented by the Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) since 2022. Particular attention is given to restrictions on advanced semiconductor technologies, especially high-performance GPUs such as Nvidia H100 and H200, which are critical for training large-scale AI models. These policies are examined in terms of their strategic objectives, including technological containment, national security considerations, and the preservation of U.S. leadership in foundational AI technologies. At the same



time, the study also considers unintended consequences such as market adaptation, technological substitution, and the emergence of alternative innovation pathways.

For China, the analysis focuses on the “Next Generation Artificial Intelligence Development Plan” introduced in 2017, which positions AI as a core national strategic priority aimed at achieving global leadership by 2030. The study further examines China’s policy responses to external technological constraints, including domestic semiconductor development (e.g., Huawei Ascend 910B), state-supported research ecosystems, and the optimization of algorithmic efficiency. Special attention is also given to the development of cost-efficient and competitive AI models such as DeepSeek R1, which illustrate China’s adaptive innovation capacity under conditions of restricted access to advanced computing hardware.

The study applies a comparative analytical framework to systematically identify structural similarities and differences between the AI strategies of the United States and China. This includes an assessment of how each state manages technological dependencies, constructs innovation ecosystems, and integrates AI into broader national security and economic strategies. Furthermore, the analysis is theoretically grounded in the concept of “weaponized interdependence” (Farrell & Newman, 2019), which explains how control over central nodes in global technological networks can be transformed into instruments of geopolitical power.

Analysis and results. The European Union (EU) adopts a fundamentally distinct trajectory in the global artificial intelligence (AI) landscape by prioritizing regulatory governance and normative power rather than technological production or platform dominance. This strategic orientation is institutionalized through the adoption of the EU Artificial Intelligence Act (EU AI Act) in 2024, which constitutes the first comprehensive supranational legal framework specifically designed to regulate AI systems across multiple domains of application. The Act introduces a risk-based regulatory taxonomy, categorizing AI systems into unacceptable, high-risk, limited-risk, and minimal-risk groups, with differentiated compliance obligations for developers, deployers, and providers of AI technologies.



This regulatory architecture reflects the broader phenomenon conceptualized as the “Brussels Effect,” which describes the European Union’s structural capacity to externalize its internal regulatory standards into the global system through market access leverage, institutional legitimacy, and legal harmonization pressures. Similar to the global diffusion of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the EU AI Act is increasingly positioned as a potential global benchmark for AI governance, particularly in areas such as transparency requirements, algorithmic accountability, human oversight, and safety assurance mechanisms. In this sense, the EU does not primarily function as a technological producer of frontier AI systems but rather as a “normative superpower” that defines the regulatory conditions under which AI technologies are developed and deployed globally.

However, this normative dominance is accompanied by significant structural constraints that limit the EU’s capacity to translate regulatory influence into technological sovereignty. Unlike the United States and China, the European Union lacks globally dominant AI companies capable of controlling foundational models, cloud infrastructure, and large-scale computing ecosystems. Although initiatives such as EuroStack, Gaia-X, and broader digital sovereignty programs aim to strengthen Europe’s strategic autonomy in digital infrastructure, these efforts remain fragmented, underfunded, and at an early stage of implementation. Consequently, the EU’s position in the global AI hierarchy can be characterized as asymmetrical: it possesses high regulatory and normative capacity but comparatively limited industrial and computational capability.

Within this context, the EU’s regulatory power interacts in complex ways with the evolving structure of the global AI order. Rather than directly competing for technological supremacy, the EU exerts influence by shaping compliance incentives for global firms seeking access to its large single market. As a result, even non-European AI developers are increasingly required to adapt their systems to European standards, effectively exporting EU regulatory logic beyond its territorial boundaries. This dynamic reinforces the EU’s role as a central actor in defining the institutional parameters of global AI governance, even in the absence of technological leadership.



In parallel, the Global South represents a critical yet often under-theorized dimension of contemporary AI geopolitics. For developing and emerging economies, access to artificial intelligence technologies is increasingly linked to structural transformation processes, including economic modernization, administrative efficiency, public service delivery, and digital infrastructure development. AI applications are being rapidly integrated into governance systems, financial technologies, healthcare diagnostics, agricultural optimization, and urban planning, thereby positioning AI as a foundational technology for development in the twenty-first century.

However, despite these opportunities, Global South states face a significant strategic dilemma regarding technological alignment within competing AI ecosystems. On one side, integration into United States-led AI architectures provides access to advanced frontier models, high-performance semiconductor technologies, and globally dominant cloud computing platforms controlled by firms such as Nvidia, Microsoft, Google, and OpenAI. On the other side, alignment with Chinese AI ecosystems offers alternative pathways characterized by state-led infrastructure investment, integrated digital governance solutions, and scalable technology transfer through initiatives such as the Digital Silk Road.

This dual dependency creates a complex form of technological choice that is not purely technical but deeply embedded in geopolitical considerations. The selection of AI infrastructure providers and platform ecosystems has long-term implications for data governance regimes, algorithmic transparency standards, cybersecurity frameworks, and the degree of digital sovereignty retained by recipient states. In many cases, once integrated into a specific AI ecosystem, countries become structurally dependent on its technical standards, update cycles, and institutional protocols, thereby reinforcing path dependency and reducing future strategic flexibility.

As a result, AI diffusion in the Global South operates as a mechanism of structural alignment within the global system. Rather than remaining neutral technological transfers, AI infrastructures function as vehicles of geopolitical



influence that embed institutional norms, governance models, and strategic dependencies. This phenomenon suggests that technological adoption is increasingly inseparable from geopolitical positioning, as states implicitly align themselves with broader digital blocs through infrastructure procurement and system integration choices.

Furthermore, this pattern challenges traditional binary interpretations of global AI competition as a simple United States–China rivalry. Instead, the emerging AI order is better understood as a fragmented yet interconnected system of competing technological ecosystems, in which multiple layers of dependency—hardware, software, data, and governance—interact simultaneously. Unlike Cold War alliances, these alignments are fluid, non-military in nature, and deeply embedded in commercial, infrastructural, and informational networks.

Therefore, the inclusion of both the European Union and the Global South reveals a more complex configuration of global AI geopolitics. The EU represents a normative-regulatory pole of influence, while the Global South constitutes a contested space of technological alignment and dependency formation. Together, they highlight the emergence of a multi-layered global AI order in which power is exercised not only through innovation leadership but also through regulatory standard-setting and infrastructural embedding.

Conclusion.

This analysis demonstrates that artificial intelligence (AI) technologies have become a central arena of contemporary geopolitical competition. The United States' export control regime and its internal paradoxes, China's adaptive innovation exemplified by models such as DeepSeek, and the European Union's regulatory strategy collectively confirm that AI is no longer solely an economic instrument but also a deeply political and strategic asset shaping global power relations.

In the context of an emerging geopolitical order, this study suggests the necessity of a third approach: the development of multilateral governance mechanisms capable of regulating the diffusion of AI technologies across borders. Such mechanisms should aim to prevent an uncontrolled technological arms race,



while simultaneously safeguarding the technological sovereignty of Global South countries and ensuring more equitable access to AI infrastructure and capabilities. Just as arms control agreements contributed to strategic stability in the nuclear era, similar institutional arrangements may be required in the age of artificial intelligence to manage risks and reduce systemic instability.

Ultimately, the most critical question remains unresolved: which AI model will achieve global dominance—and, in doing so, whose values, norms, and interests will form the foundation of the 21st-century international order? This is not merely a technological competition but a civilizational choice that will shape the future architecture of global governance.

REFERENCES

1. Bradford, A. (2020). *The Brussels effect: How the European Union rules the world*. Oxford University Press.
2. Drezner, D. W. (2021). The toothless hegemon: Why the international order is resilient. *Foreign Affairs*, 100(3), 10–19.
3. Farrell, H., & Newman, A. L. (2019). Weaponized interdependence: How global economic networks shape state coercion. *International Security*, 44(1), 42–79.
4. Kania, E. B. (2021). *The United States, China, and the contest for artificial intelligence*. Center for a New American Security.
5. Khan, S. (2023). *The semiconductor supply chain: Assessing China's vulnerabilities*. Center for Security and Emerging Technology.
6. Lee, K.-F. (2018). *AI superpowers: China, Silicon Valley, and the new world order*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
7. Roberts, H., Cowls, J., Morley, J., Taddeo, M., Wang, V., & Floridi, L. (2021). The Chinese approach to artificial intelligence: An analysis of policy, ethics, and regulation. *AI & Society*, 36(1), 59–77.
8. Summers, L. H. (2023). America's economic leadership is at stake. *Foreign Policy*, April 2023.
9. Zysman, J., & Tyson, L. (Eds.). (1983). *American industry in international competition: Government policies and corporate strategies*. Cornell University Press.