

National Security: Challenges, Threats and Opportunities for India in the Era of Artificial Intelligence

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Abstract

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has appeared as a transformative force restructuring the manner of national security and strategic rivalry in the twenty-first century. For India, a growing regional power located in an explosive geopolitical atmosphere, AI presents both extraordinary strategic chances and multidimensional security encounters. This paper scrutinizes the consequences of AI for India's national security through the investigative lenses of Realism, Techno-Nationalism, and Securitization Theory. It argues that AI is gradually becoming a strategic factor of power, military efficiency, and sovereign autonomy in the international system. While AI gives India chances for military modernization, cyber defence improvement, intelligence amalgamation, and strategic balancing against rivals, it instantaneously presents new intimidations including autonomous warfare, AI-enabled cyberattacks, algorithmic deception, and technological necessity on foreign digital substructures. By manufacturing strategic studies literature with developing discussions on military innovation and digital sovereignty, the paper tries to explore that India's national security plan must move yonder technological acceptance toward the development of a comprehensive AI governance and tactical integration agenda. The study accomplishes that India's forthcoming security posture will be contingent

meaningfully on its capacity to join AI while handling the strategic uncertainty, ethical problems, and reliance risks made by AI-enabled security alteration.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, National Security, India, Realism, Techno-Nationalism, Securitization Theory, Strategic Studies

Introduction

The issue of National Security has been a hot topic of discussion in every academic circles in the world. The world is entering in the new phase of insecurity where different resources are put at prominence. Thus , National Security is not the only limited to defence but has now a broad spectrum that is inclusive of economic security, energy security, physical security, environmental security, food security, border security, and cyber security. Not only this National Security has two major categorization that is Challenges that are primarily not fatal for exitance but certainly for hegemony. Pakistan is hence a challenge as it has no ability to render defeat to India but certainly it can do damage to our hegemony in South Asia. But on contrary China is a threat as it has annexed Tibet which was an integral part of India and continuously intrudes in North-Eastern territories of India and hence a big threat to India as seen in 1962 war where Indian borders were breached by the People’s Liberation Army leading to the annexation of Tibet. Thus, lessons should be learnt from the past and new policy should be devised by not repeating the mistakes made in the past. Hence, India needs opportunities to bypass them all and take care of its National Interest. Most of the literature concerning the topics are Euro- Centric / West-Centric. The countries of the third world find no place in it. Moreover, the hawkish comments by Condoleezza Rice on the Third World losing its relevance in Contemporary circumstances have challenged the Decolonized and Developing lot to prove its relevance by asserting itself on the international front. The West has been dominating the knowledge creation, global public perception manufacturing and economics of the region, hence becomes a tool for shaping public opinion and perception. The know-how of

manufacturing has been in the hands of the West and the developed lot the lords of Global North or the industrialised lot .

“For many years, the American Academy and its membership have been deeply involved in the field of international security and arms control. From the publication of the Summer Study on Arms Control in 1960 to last year's two-volume issue of *Daedalus* on US defence policy, the Academy has published a wide range of studies on security, arms control and development issues. In addition, it has promoted East-West scientific exchanges through its sponsorship of the Soviet-American Disarmament Study group (SADS) and the US Pugwash Committee”¹.

The disarmament process has been a living example of the products produced by the industries of the West. However, we witness that technology exchange take place between the two powerful arch-rivals no transfer of technology actively and readily takes place between the Global North and the underdeveloped Third World as it will be against the vested interest of the Communist block and developed West. The dominance of the West or the developed lot remains unaffected and the third world is left out for following all the laws rules and regulations. Thus, India as a leader of Third World and Global South has an opportunity to develop platform of AI which it is developing using extracted data from NITI Ayog for developing AI for the purpose of catering needs of Human and National Security and role to play as a voice of Global South. The major threats come from cybersecurity, and autonomous weapons which are the gifts of AI.

I argue that human security is a distinctive notion, which goes well beyond all earlier attempts by Asian governments to 'redefine' and broaden their own traditional understanding of security as protection of sovereignty and territorial integrity against military threats. At the same

¹ Anonymous, “International Security Studies”, *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, Feb., 1983, Vol. 36, No. 5 (Feb., 1983), p.4 URL:<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3823268> (accessed on 7 December 2023)

time, the development of this notion has strong roots within the region, which could provide an important foundation for promoting a collective human security agenda. To identify a common conceptual ground between the East and the West remains a challenge for scholars and policy-makers concerned with the promotion of human security in both arenas.²

Many scholars have argued that the concept of security needs to be redefined and its spectrum needs to be broadened up as the concept of security is very narrowly defined in context of Human, putting his basic needs and well-being of humans first. On contrary West centric concept of Security is weapon manufacturing oriented and benefits the Capitalist and big bankers who are looking for profits no matter from where it comes from. The more countries and nations go means more business for them. For these Bankers and Weapon manufactures war is business and business is good. Thus, Wars are fanned in ethnic fault lines a good example of this is West Asia and Africa.

Artificial intelligence is no longer confined to automating battlefield systems—it's increasingly capable of shaping public perception through tailored digital content. By curating persuasive narratives and distributing them with precision, AI can influence civilian sentiment in ways that were once the domain of state propaganda. The implications go beyond psychological operations. As autonomous systems converge with emerging biotechnologies, the possibility of AI-enabled delivery mechanisms for biological agents, while still speculative, deserves serious scrutiny. This technological shift has disrupted not only conventional security frameworks but also the broader human security paradigm. The dual-use nature of AI—serving both civilian and military domains—demands a more nuanced understanding of its operational scope and evolving risks. What is needed is a comprehensive research agenda that explores

² Amitav Acharya, "Human Security: East versus West", *International Journal*, (Ontario) Summer, 2001, Vol. 56, No. 3 (Summer, 2001), Sage Publications, Ltd. on behalf of the Canadian International Council, p.443 URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40203577> (accessed on 7 December 2024)

both the tangible vulnerabilities (infrastructure, defence systems, supply chains) and the intangible ones: public trust, strategic perception, and cognitive sovereignty. Without such inquiry, states may find themselves unprepared—not just for physical threats, but for the erosion of their narrative control and societal cohesion.

Literature Review

The growing scholarship on Artificial Intelligence and national security has increasingly conceptualized AI as a strategic technology capable of altering the distribution of power in international politics. Existing literature can be broadly divided into three major strands: military-strategic analyses, political economy and techno-nationalist approaches, and critical security perspectives.

The first strand focuses on AI as a military revolution and force multiplier. Scholars of strategic studies argue that AI may constitute a new Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA), transforming warfare through autonomous weapons systems, predictive analytics, enhanced command-and-control, and machine-speed decision-making. This literature emphasizes AI's capacity to compress operational timelines, improve precision targeting, and reshape deterrence dynamics. However, it also warns of escalation risks, accidental conflict, and destabilization resulting from autonomous systems and opaque algorithmic decision-making.

The second strand examines AI through the lens of techno-nationalism and strategic political economy. Here, technological innovation is treated as an instrument of national power and geopolitical competition. Scholars argue that AI supremacy increasingly depends upon control over semiconductors, data ecosystems, cloud infrastructure, and algorithmic innovation. Within this framework, technological dependence is conceptualized as a strategic vulnerability that can constrain state sovereignty. This literature is particularly relevant for India, where dependence on imported semiconductor technologies and foreign AI platforms complicates aspirations for strategic autonomy.

The third strand adopts critical and constructivist perspectives, particularly securitization theory, to analyze how AI is framed discursively as an existential threat requiring extraordinary state intervention. Scholars in this tradition argue that the securitization of AI enables states to expand surveillance capacities, justify exceptional cyber governance regimes, and militarize technological development under the rubric of national security.

Despite the expanding global literature, scholarship specifically focused on India remains comparatively underdeveloped and policy-oriented. Existing Indian analyses tend to emphasize defence modernization and technological adoption but often lack robust theoretical engagement with broader International Relations frameworks.

Theoretical Framework

This paper employs a tripartite theoretical framework combining Realism, Techno-Nationalism, and Securitization Theory to analyse the implications of Artificial Intelligence for India's national security.

This paper seeks to address that gap by situating India's AI-security nexus within a theoretically grounded IR framework.

Thus, the paper will address the following questions

- 1- What is National Security?
- 2- What is the public perception of National Security?
- 3- What is Realism and Strategic Competition?
- 4- What is Techno-Nationalism and Strategic Sovereignty?
- 5- What is Securitization Theory and the Politics of AI?

The paper will use secondary source and deductive nature to study and will go from general to Particular. The study will keep a strict consideration on the issue of national security and national interest in mind while exploring the topic.

The study will explore the threats, opportunities and challenges which the AI possess to National Security of India. Hence, the topic is of significance as it deals with on whether the use of AI should be in the in the defence sector or Catering to the needs of Human Security. Thus, it takes care of the use and consequences of the use of AI in the defence sector.

Methodology:-

The paper makes extensive use of secondary literature and is qualitative in nature as it uses deductive techniques for the study of AI and the threats & challenges it poses for India and how to look out of opportunities in the contemporary scenario keeping national interest at prominence.

Theoretical Framework-

The study will contribute to the new form of research on national security as it will examine the impact of AI on national security on India and the opportunities it opened India acting as a source of inspiration for Third world countries. Previously if we are to glance at the literature produced by Amitav Acharya emphasizing on the need for Asian School for Strategic Studies my paper will contribute in some way or the other in this field³. The need for a new school for security studies is a demand kept on prominence as AI is a complete game changer as it has brought all Nations on a common platform for needs of security and have explored new ways for maintaining it. My paper will help to explore these dimensions of research thereby contributing significantly.

What is National Security?

If we are to glance at the works done by scholars the definitions of security are based on & influenced by euro centric approach related to world wars and cold war involving disarmament & peace treaties between various parties in conflict. But the most acceptable definition seems

³ Amitav Acharya, "An Asian school of strategic studies?", in Russel W. Glenn (ed.) , *New Directions in Strategic Thinking 2.0*, (Canberra, ANU Press:2018),p.1 URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv47wfp.19> (Accessed on 7 December 2023)

to me is “National Security is a state of mind where a particular group of people controlling resources of a region feel threatened of losing them to others who may use them against their will or wish form which they derive profit or sense of security” . Other scholars have the opinion that

“The boundaries of intellectual disciplines are permeable; as a result, any effort to delineate the precise scope of security studies is somewhat arbitrary. The main focus of security studies is easy to identify, however: it is the phenomenon of war. Security studies assumes that conflict between states is always a possibility and that the use of military force has far-reaching effects on states and societies (Bull, 1968; Martin, 1980). Accordingly, security studies may be defined as the study of the threat, use, and control of military force (Nye and Lynn-Jones, 1988). It explores the conditions that make the use of force more likely, the ways that the use of force affects individuals, states, and societies, and the specific policies that states adopt in order to prepare for, prevent, or engage in war.”⁴

What is the public perception of National Security?

The public perception about National Security is military, religion centric that is shaped by domestic politics sometime. The National Security many times is engineered by doing otherization of minorities creating an enemy within based on religion or ethnicity or neighbouring countries behaviour in context of South Asia. The common masses in India believe that Pakistan is a potential threat for India and China to be a major challenge which is contrary⁵. Thus, the public has a very flawed type of understanding regarding National

⁴Stephen M. Walt, “The Renaissance of Security Studies”, *International Studies Quarterly*, (Connecticut) Jun., 1991, Vol. 35, No. 2 (Jun., 1991) Wiley on behalf of *The International Studies Association*, p.212 URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2600471> (Accessed on 7 December 2023)

⁵ Anonymous, India views China as its primary adversary, Pakistan more an ancillary security problem: US defence intelligence report, *The Economic Times*, 25 May, 2025 . URL: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-views-china-as-its-primary-adversary-pakistan-more-an-ancillary-security-problem-says-us-defence-intelligence-report/articleshow/121394863.cms> (accessed on 02 March 2026)

Security. The other dimension of national security is completely ignored. To be very precise the common masses do not have a good understanding of National Security. The age of social media has further complicated the situation as now disinformation has become a new tool for spreading anarchy and chaos. The disinformation may lead to conflict and escalation in conflict amongst state or within. The social media like Face-Book, YouTube, Meta, twitter , and Google have contributed to the problems more than resolving them. Though these social media giants have contributed to the flow of knowledge but at the very same time they have tried to dent or synthetically manufacture public perception and shape them by spreading misinformation and disinformation. Now the battlelines are being drawn on the cyber/virtual frontiers as well. The States and their sovereign territories are now being rendered insignificant as the states are unable to check flow of information. The Artificial Intelligence, and search engines have rendered state boundaries redundant as now anyone can peep into anywhere by using them. Thus, the information can be used or shared by or with Non-State Actors to destabilize a particular country.

Realism and Strategic Competition

Realism offers the initial basis for understanding AI as a premeditated ability within an rebellious transnational system. In realist thought, states pursue existence through power buildup and balancing behaviour. AI advances armed abilities, intelligence gathering, cyber warfare capacity, and strategic deterrence, thereby becoming a critical constituent of comparative power. India's AI modernization can thus be interpreted as a harmonizing reply to China's technological rise and Pakistan's uneven security strategies. However, realism also forecasts that AI will worsen the security predicament, as one state's defensive upgrading may be took by rivals as aggressive growth, producing arms race dynamics.

Techno-Nationalism and Strategic Sovereignty

Techno-nationalism complements realism by highlighting technological self-sufficiency as a precondition for strategic independence. In the digital era, sovereignty progressively depends on control over strategic technologies and set-up. AI competence is not limited to software modernization but covers access to semiconductors, compute capacity, planned datasets, and domestic modernization ecosystems. India's AI policy and Atmanirbhar Bharat enterprises reflect techno-nationalist energies to reduce need on foreign technological networks and improve sovereign control over critical digital setup.

Securitization Theory and the Politics of AI

Securitization Theory offers a constructivist lens to inspect how AI is broadly outlined as an factual national security issue. Through securitizing talking acts by policymakers, military officials, and strategic leaders, AI is altered from a technological development into a security imperative demanding exceptional measures. This process legitimizes long-drawn-out scrutiny, augmented defence expenditure, quicker military AI mixing, and wider state interference in digital governance. The securitization outline is mainly useful in analysing how AI-related danger stories shape policy retorts outside objective factual abilities.

Conclusion –

The paper have taken in to consideration threat which AI have multiplied predicaments for India after coming in to existence as countries like China have developed AI parks and have invested in trillions for its own version of AI making surveillance more efficient and effective hence becoming a threat for India lagging behind, Pakistan has its own AI powered drones programmes; a challenge for India. Thus, paper have taken these in to consideration and have made deep investigation.

Conflict of Interest: The corresponding author, on behalf of second author, confirms that there are no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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