<u>Input Paper</u>**: AI and Foreign Policy**

From machine learning to generative AI – can emerging technologies offer new tools for foreign policy?

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In recent years, the field of artificial intelligence (AI) has witnessed remarkable progress. Rapid technological advancement has led to the development of increasingly sophisticated AI tools, which possess the capacity to facilitate and propel various facets of our existence and professional endeavors. Despite the rapid progress in AI adoption across various domains, such as medicine, law, transport and others, its integration within the realm of foreign policy remains relatively underexplored. Over the past decade or so, governments and international organizations have begun to catch up with formal and informal strategies to boost traditional diplomatic practices through predictive analytics, real-time data analysis, reporting etc. However, a more structured response to the growing significance of AI in international relations is still lacking. As governments continue to navigate the evolving landscape of AI-driven foreign policy, ongoing research, collaboration, and ethical scrutiny will be imperative to harness the full potential of AI while mitigating associated risks.

This input paper examines the evolving landscape of AI and its potential impact on foreign policy. It analyzes the historical context of AI's relevance in foreign policy, identifies the topics that emerged as priority for the field, and highlights the recent efforts of different organizations to build practical AI tools to advance the foreign policy work. While the majority of these tools are currently in their preliminary stages of development or have been conducted as experimental ventures, they offer valuable insights into the potential trajectory of the field.

1. AI as a topic for foreign policy

In 2017, when Russian President Vladimir Putin [asserted](#) that the nation that leads in AI 'will be the ruler of the world', all eyes were set at this emerging technology. Somewhere close to that time [Elon Musk said](#) that artificial intelligence could be the 'most likely cause of World War III', which further intensified the focus on AI's impact on geopolitics, elevating it to the forefront of numerous foreign policy discussions. Moreover, China's escalated investments in AI development, research and education heightened concern among other countries about the prospect of losing their competitive edge in this transformative field.

[One early research paper](#) from 2018 points out that in this phase foreign policy practitioners displayed interest in three main topics concerning AI: (1) economic opportunities and risks, (2)

national security implications, and (3) impacts on democracy. Foreign ministries diligently began monitoring the ramifications of AI on economic growth, markets, trade, and labor migration. This entailed examining the potential and consequences of automation, which could lead to substantial cost savings and enhanced efficiency, but also carried inherent risks of significant unemployment and societal instability. When the EU Commission embarked on the journey towards an AI Act in 2020 it had become clear that regulation would be complex.

The second crucial area of interest, extending from the military domain to the broader foreign policy arena, centered on the impact of AI on national security and subsequently, human security. Foreign ministries intensified their efforts to comprehend the implications of AI weapons, particularly autonomous weapons systems operating without human control. Governments soon recognized that threats did not solely emanate from conventional "hard weapons", but also encompassed disinformation and misinformation campaigns, as well as other malicious applications of digital platforms and social media networks.

Associated with the heightened focus on the transformative power of the internet on democracy, similar attention was directed toward the intersection of AI and democracy; the third crucial area of interest. This attention arose, in part, from the ongoing tension between the potential expansion of freedoms of expression, civic engagements, and social progress and the corresponding risks of surveillance, censorship, and discrimination. The evolving discourse on AI's role in democratic processes and human rights has thus become a critical aspect of foreign policy considerations.

Another study, commissioned by the Special Committee on Artificial Intelligence in a Digital Age (AIDA), made a noteworthy observation regarding the use of AI in diplomacy, or, rather, as a tool of power. While the economic and social ramifications of the escalating adoption of AI have garnered considerable attention in Europe, there remains a conspicuous gap in understanding the influence of AI on global politics, the reconfiguration of the global balance of power, and its potential contribution to reshaping the landscape of international politics. These crucial topics, pertinent to the far-reaching implications of AI, have yet to receive the appropriate scrutiny they deserve within scholarly discourse and policy deliberations.

In July 2023, the United Nations Security Council held its first meeting to discuss the risks and opportunities of AI. During this unprecedented session at the world's top diplomatic body, member states engaged in deliberations on the dual facets of AI, recognizing it as both a "catastrophic risk for humans" and an "historic opportunity." A key takeaway from the session was the acknowledgment that no nation would remain unaffected by the impact of AI, underscoring the necessity for cohesive and coordinated action among all countries to assess and address the associated risks and opportunities. This milestone meeting signifies the UN's growing attention to AI-related matters, extending beyond the Security Council to other levels of the organization, such as Our Common Agenda, led by the UN Secretary-General, and consultations on the Global Digital Compact, which encompasses the governance of AI and emerging technologies.

2. AI as a subject of agreements and treaties

As the integration of AI into various facets of people's lives continued to expand, the imperative for robust regulation and cross-country agreements became increasingly apparent. Concerns relating to privacy, safety, and security emerged as prominent considerations, prompting the development of standards aimed at ensuring that AI applications mitigate, to the greatest extent possible, biases, discrimination, and other unintended consequences.

Concurrently, the drive to regulate AI has gained momentum worldwide. The 2021 [UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI](#) stands as a momentous response to these pressing needs, garnering agreement among 193 Member States and constituting the first-ever global normative framework. [Stanford University's 2023 AI Index](#) highlights a total of 37 AI-related bills globally that were enacted into (national) law in 2022. Notably, the United States spearheaded the regulatory efforts, enacting nine laws, with Spain and the Philippines following closely with five and four laws, respectively. Recent apprehensions arising from advancements in generative AI have spurred regulators across the globe to pay heightened attention to the regulation of AI.

Within the European Union (EU), concerted efforts are underway to regulate AI. [The EU AI Act](#), the world's first comprehensive AI regulation, represents a pivotal step. Simultaneously, emphasis on fostering trustworthy and ethical AI practices remains a focal point of European endeavors. Notably, the implementation of the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) has exerted a considerable influence on other countries, leading them to fortify their data protection and privacy regulations to align with EU standards. A similar impact is anticipated with the latest developments in AI regulation.

3. AI as a tool for foreign policy

Initially the application of AI systems and projects was confined to big tech companies and well-resourced academic institutions, given high cost and limited accessibility. However, recent developments, such as the increased availability of data, more accessible computing power, and progress in machine learning, have, to some extent, democratized AI adoption, thus enabling other organizations and fields to venture into this domain. Foreign policy, including diplomacy, negotiations, mediation, and crisis management, stands among the domains exploring AI's potential.

Notably, the advent of AI-generated tools represents a significant milestone in the integration of AI into foreign policy. While many of these AI applications are currently in the nascent stages of testing, exploration, or experimentation, they hold significant promise for enhancing foreign policy practices. Advancements in AI, particularly in natural language processing and machine learning, offer the potential to augment the work of foreign policy experts. The development of AI-generated tools has opened avenues for exploring predictive analytics, real-time data analysis, and improved decision-making processes. However, it is crucial to exercise caution as

the technology matures, ensuring rigorous testing and verification to prevent potential risks associated with misinformation and biased outputs.

In the following, some examples of merging AI and foreign policy are presented:

1. **DATA ANALYSIS AND SITUATIONAL AWARENESS:**
   AI can process vast amounts of data from diverse sources such as social media, news articles, and government reports. It can help identify patterns, trends, and potential threats in real-time, providing policymakers with a comprehensive and up-to-date understanding of global events and situations. AI can be employed to analyze global trade data, predict market trends, and assess the impact of economic policies on international relations. AI and machine learning algorithms can analyze climate data to help countries assess their environmental impact, monitor climate change, and develop strategies to mitigate its effects on a global scale.

   Example: PREVIEW Delta Analysis
   Developed by the German Federal Foreign Office's PREVIEW section, the Delta Analysis is a pilot study for operational data integration and harmonization. It provides interactive front-end visualizations and an analytical framework to guide early action planning and implementation. The current pilot focuses on Africa's Lake Chad region with its high humanitarian and political relevance due to ongoing conflicts, multiple conflict drivers and compounding risk, and Germany's and others' engagement in the region.

2. **PREDICTIVE ANALYTICS:**
   Data and AI hold immense potential for predictive analytics in foreign policy work by leveraging historical and real-time data to forecast geopolitical trends and potential outcomes of policy decisions. Through the integration of diverse data sources, such as diplomatic documents, social media data, and economic indicators, AI algorithms can identify patterns and correlations that human analysts might overlook. These predictive insights can assist policymakers in understanding emerging threats, anticipating diplomatic opportunities, and formulating informed strategies.

   Example: The Violence & Impacts Early-Warning System (VIEWS)
   The Violence & Impacts Early-Warning System (VIEWS) is an academic research consortium between Uppsala University and Peace Research Institute Oslo that brings together a suite of interrelated projects to study and predict the risk of political violence and its societal impacts. The consortium offers an award-winning prediction system that systematically monitors hundreds of structural drivers and complex conflict dynamics and generates monthly predictions of impending conflict across the world – for each country and sub-national location up to three years into the future.

3. **REPORTING FROM CURRENT SESSIONS, CONSULTATIONS, AND NEGOTIATIONS:**
Natural language processing (NLP) algorithms can extract key insights and trends from transcripts, meeting minutes, and other diplomatic records, facilitating the creation of comprehensive and timely reports. AI-powered analytics can identify patterns, sentiments, and emerging issues, aiding diplomats in understanding the dynamics of ongoing negotiations and consultations. By automating the report generation process, AI enables foreign policy practitioners to focus on critical decision-making and strategic planning while ensuring data-driven analyses that enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of foreign policy work.

Example: DiploGPT
DiploGPT, launched in 2023, is an AI-powered tool that provides reporting from live or recorded events and meetings. The system is particularly beneficial for small and developing countries that do not have the human and institutional capacity to follow numerous UN meetings. It combines customized algorithms, specialized data sets for diplomacy, and the capabilities of a large language model (LLM). According to Diplo, the first official report produced with this tool, condensing a United Nations Security Council debate, "marks the start of a new era in multilateral diplomacy".

4. **CONSULTATION PROCESSES WITH CITIZENS IN POLICYMAKING AND CITIZEN INCLUSION IN PEACE PROCESSES:**
AI-powered tools, such as NLP and sentiment analysis, can analyze large volumes of citizen feedback from diverse sources, including social media and online surveys. This data-driven approach provides policymakers with valuable insights into public opinions and concerns, enabling more informed decision-making and ensuring that policies (and peace processes) better align with the needs and aspirations of the citizens they affect. Additionally, AI can help overcome barriers to participation by offering multilingual interfaces, ensuring accessibility for diverse communities, and promoting broader engagement, ultimately promoting greater inclusivity in shaping policies and fostering sustainable peace.

Example: UN DPA DPO AI-assisted large-scale public dialogues
Towards the end of 2020, the UN's Innovation Cell supported the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) in designing and deploying the methodology in Libyan dialect on two separate occasions related to the UN-led Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF). The first digital dialogue, which took place on 16 October with 1000 Libyan youth, aimed to help set the agenda for a subsequent meeting with youth groups under the LPDF. Based on the experience and results of the October dialogue, UNSMIL chose to apply the methodology for a consultation with the wider Libyan public, including 1500 individuals, on political, military, and economic issues in early November 2020. In continuing support of UNSMIL, the Innovation

Cell developed an online dialogue platform (Alhiwar.ly) and prepared for a nationwide poll using Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI).

5. **SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYSIS FOR PRACTITIONERS:**
   AI-powered natural language processing algorithms can analyze vast amounts of social media data from diverse sources, helping experts identify key discussions, sentiment patterns, and potential disinformation campaigns related to their domain of work. By automating the process of monitoring social media platforms, AI enables foreign policy experts to stay informed about public perceptions and reactions to global events, facilitating more informed decision-making and targeted communication strategies.

Example: Phoenix
Phoenix is Build Up's process for peace and mediation practitioners to work ethically with social media data to inform programming. It is social media analysis made by and for peacebuilders. The project creates accessible process guides and open-source tools for peacebuilders and mediators around the world to be able to do social media analysis, thus contributing to decolonize data. It creates software and AI systems that can provide new insights into polarization on digital media, including social media. It creates a community of developers and peacebuilders that can sustain the longevity of, and demonstrate the possibility for, future collaborations.

6. **MONITORING CEASEFIRES OR COMPLIANCE WITH PEACE AGREEMENTS:**
   Ceasefires are vital for preventing further conflict and violence, serving as a crucial element in the conflict-prevention toolkit and often initiating the path towards peace agreements. Monitoring is typically done by in-person monitors, but in non-permissive environments, this may not be feasible. For instance, the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (2014-2022) utilized technology to reduce staff exposure to danger and manage a vast area with limited human resources. AI-powered systems can analyze satellite imagery, drone footage, social media data, and other sources to detect any potential violations or irregularities on the ground that might be indicative of non-compliance with ceasefire terms or peace agreements. This proactive monitoring allows for timely intervention and verification, enabling stakeholders to address any breaches promptly and facilitate the maintenance of peace and stability in conflict-affected regions.

Example: UNIDIR Report Exploring the Use of Technology for Remote Ceasefire Monitoring and Verification
Several projects showcase the potential of AI integration with diverse data acquisition technologies, encompassing sensors, satellites, aerial platforms, and media platforms. Notably, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) employs Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) equipped with thermal cameras to detect heat anomalies on the ground. Subsequently, AI algorithms analyze the data to identify

potential evidence of landmines or cluster munitions. In policing applications, a company combines UAVs, cameras, acoustic sensors, and AI to accurately pinpoint the location of gunshots and deliver remote video feeds of unfolding situations, enhancing situational awareness and response capabilities.

Additional resources:

- Article: How AI Could Revolutionize Diplomacy, Foreign Policy, March 2023
- Research Paper: Diplomacy and Artificial Intelligence - Reflections on Practical Assistance for Diplomatic Negotiations, Volker Stanzel and Daniel Voelsen, SWP Research Paper, 2022
- Report: Mapping AI's challenges and opportunities for the conduct of diplomacy, DiploFoundation, 2019
- Webinar: AI as a Tool for Diplomacy and Mediation, DiploFoundation, May 2022
- Video (1.04h): Foreign Policy in the Age of Artificial Intelligence — An FP Virtual Dialogue, April 2021
- Policy Brief: Artificial Intelligence and Foreign Policy, Stiftung Neue Verantwortung, January 2018

ABOUT US:

Data Innovation Lab is an innovative collaboration, established between the German Federal Foreign Office and GovTech Campus Germany. It serves as a dynamic hub, fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholders such as local actors, civil society organizations, UN agencies, tech entrepreneurs, governments, private sector, and academia in Germany and globally. The Lab functions as an experimental ground for testing and refining various policy and use case formats within the global arena. The overarching objective is the development of data applications, particularly those harnessing the power of artificial intelligence (AI), while upholding ethical principles and contributing to multilateral processes.

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