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HYBRID WARFARE THREAT

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**MASTER'S PROGRAMS IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
FACULTY OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SCIENCE
JENDERAL ACHMAD YANI UNIVERSITY**

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Feeding the Algorithm: How Nations Shape AI Training Data to Project Power and Influence Global News Narratives

Nikos Panagiotou & Ioannis Tzortzis

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Large language models (LLMs) and generative artificial intelligence (AI) systems are emerging as key intermediaries in the global circulation of news and political knowledge. Yet the datasets that feed these systems are neither neutral nor universal. Governments, regulatory bodies, and corporate ecosystems are now treating training data as a strategic resource—one that can encode national priorities, cultural hierarchies, and geopolitical narratives into the algorithmic infrastructures of communication. This conceptual essay develops the notion of algorithmic diplomacy, arguing that nations are actively curating, regulating, and disseminating datasets to project soft power through AI. Drawing on theories of epistemic sovereignty, digital colonialism, and media framing, the paper identifies three main mechanisms: (1) data curation and localization, (2) model fine-tuning and regulatory alignment, and (3) narrative seeding through open-source ecosystems. Comparative illustrations from the European Union, the United States, China, Russia, and the Gulf states reveal how “feeding the algorithm” has become a new instrument of influence within the global information order. The essay concludes that algorithmic infrastructures now constitute a form of epistemic territory—a contested space where values, identities, and political legitimacy are negotiated through data rather than discourse.

Keywords: *AI Geopolitics, Large language model, Data sovereignty, Algorithmic Diplomacy, Global Media, Soft power*

Introduction

From Information Power to Algorithmic Power

In the past decade, the architecture of global communication has shifted from the open web of texts, images, and hyperlinks to opaque algorithmic systems that extract, categorize, and reproduce human knowledge. Where once the key struggle concerned access to media channels, today it concerns access to the training datasets that shape machine perception. This transformation redefines the very nature of media power.

As large language models such as GPT-4, Gemini, ERNIE Bot, or Falcon 180B become everyday interfaces to information, the politics of news and knowledge is increasingly mediated by statistical patterns learned from data. When these datasets are dominated by specific linguistic or ideological sources, AI models reproduce their cultural logic. Thus, the curation of data has emerged as an instrument of soft power—a mechanism through which states and corporations alike seek to shape how the world is interpreted and narrated.

This paper advances the argument that feeding the algorithm is a deliberate act of geopolitical communication. It is a form of algorithmic diplomacy: the strategic management of data inputs, model architectures, and governance frameworks to project influence and protect informational sovereignty. Understanding this process is essential for scholars of global media because algorithmic systems are no longer passive tools—they are active participants in the production of reality.

Research Aim and Contribution

Rather than offering an empirical evaluation of particular models, this essay provides a conceptual and comparative framework. It traces how five geopolitical blocs—the United States, the European Union, China, Russia, and the Gulf states—approach the relationship between AI and media influence. By bringing together insights from international communication, political economy of data, and critical AI studies, it contributes to three debates central to Global Media and Communication:

1. The globalization of algorithmic infrastructures and the reconfiguration of media hegemony.
2. The rise of data sovereignty as a new modality of national power.
3. The implications of AI for pluralism, journalism, and the democratic circulation of meaning.

The paper argues that the contest over training data is neither technical nor peripheral. It represents a new epistemic frontier, where the capacity to shape what AI “knows” becomes equivalent to shaping what societies believe.

Conceptualizing “Feeding the Algorithm”

The metaphor of feeding underscores two dimensions: (1) the material provisioning of datasets—the text, images, code, and audiovisual material that sustain machine learning; and (2) the normative act of selection—deciding what is nutritious or toxic to the informational body politic. Just as public broadcasters once filtered national identity through editorial choices, today ministries, regulators, and data consortia filter identity through training pipelines. “Feeding the algorithm” thus captures the convergence of technical engineering and ideological narration.

Theoretical Framework

Epistemic Sovereignty and Data Colonialism

The first theoretical pillar concerns epistemic sovereignty—the right and ability of political communities to define the parameters of legitimate knowledge. Historically, control over communication channels guaranteed narrative authority; in the digital era, control over data flows serves the same function. Couldry and Mejias (2019) describe this process as data colonialism, whereby human experience is continuously appropriated, quantified, and monetized by dominant technological powers.

From this perspective, the training data of AI systems form an infrastructure of epistemic extraction. Nations lacking robust digital industries become raw-material exporters—providers of linguistic and cultural data to foreign platforms—while advanced economies consolidate interpretive control. Consequently, several states have begun to legislate data localization, compelling that national data be stored and processed domestically. Such measures are often justified on privacy grounds but also express a deeper ambition: to reclaim epistemic sovereignty by feeding one’s own narratives into AI.

In this sense, the competition over AI datasets parallels historical struggles over cultural imperialism. If the 20th century was marked by debates on who speaks in global media, the 21st century revolves around what the machine learns to say.

Soft Power, Digital Geopolitics, and Algorithmic Diplomacy

Joseph Nye's (2004) concept of soft power—the ability to attract and co-opt rather than coerce—remains instructive, yet requires extension to the algorithmic age. Digital networks transform persuasion into infrastructure. As Bjola and Holmes (2020) argue, diplomacy now operates through code, standards, and platforms—a process they call digital diplomacy. Building on their work, this essay introduces the term algorithmic diplomacy to denote state efforts to embed national values within AI systems and to negotiate their global diffusion.

Algorithmic diplomacy functions across three domains:

1. Regulatory Diplomacy: Crafting laws and ethical guidelines (e.g., EU AI Act, China's Generative AI Measures) that project normative authority beyond borders.
2. Infrastructural Diplomacy: Investing in sovereign LLMs and data centers as symbols of technological independence.
3. Narrative Diplomacy: Feeding national archives, cultural repositories, and media corpora into training pipelines to ensure representational parity.

In all three domains, attraction stems not from messages but from standards—from the moral and technical architectures through which the world is mediated. Hence, algorithmic diplomacy transforms communication power from symbolic persuasion to systemic design.

Framing Theory and Algorithmic Mediality

Entman (1993) defines framing as the process of selecting aspects of reality and making them salient to promote particular interpretations. LLMs, by predicting the next probable word, perform framing at scale. They condense collective linguistic memory into statistically likely associations. Thus, the framing function is automated and invisible. The “salience” of certain interpretations is no longer the outcome of editorial decision-making but of data distribution.

Hall's 1980 encoding/decoding model shows how meaning is made from the way we understand cultural norms, and this is also what happens with the interaction between the AI model's output and the expectations of the user.

Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model of 1988 says that there are structural barriers that control what information gets through to the public, something that's comparable to the biases and guidelines used in AI systems. Coming hotfooting out of the 90s, Castells' theory of communication power stresses the role of networked infrastructures in shaping the way we understand the world, a phenomenon that's intensified by AI systems that can now reach an almost unlimited scale.

When a model trained predominantly on Western English-language news responds to a query about "freedom," "protest," or "terrorism," its linguistic patterns already encode ideological priors. Consequently, AI systems act as meta-framers—they frame the frames through which publics understand events.

Well-known theories on the horizon of these debates are not, therefore, invalidated by the emergence of LLMs.

This reconceptualization bridges communication theory and AI studies. Whereas classical media framing focused on journalists and institutions, algorithmic framing shifts attention to datasets, tokenization, and model alignment. The newsroom of the future may reside in the pre-training corpus.

Critical Political Economy of AI

From a political-economy standpoint, training data represent the labor of millions of writers, journalists, and users whose content is scraped without compensation. Schiller's (1999) idea of digital capitalism finds new expression here: value is produced not only through content consumption but through data extraction that sustains proprietary models. This reinforces asymmetries between data-rich and data-poor regions.

Developing countries risk becoming informational peripheries, dependent on Western or Chinese AI providers. Their news narratives, cultural idioms, and linguistic specificities are under-represented, leading to what could be termed algorithmic dependency. Addressing this imbalance requires not only policy interventions but the creation of local datasets and open-source alternatives that reflect diverse epistemologies.

Technical Pathways of Algorithmic Framing

When training large language models, algorithmic bias doesn't come by chance, it's basically a result of the way the model has been constructed. Breaking down text into

tiny units that mirror the way we use words, and giving more weight to languages that already have a lot of online presence.

Well-known researchers Bender et al. In 2021 showed that this leads to under-resourced languages and cultures being poorly represented. When this imbalance is repeated over the millions of times it takes to train a model, the result is a fundamental skewing of the internal representation of the model towards the most dominant digital cultures.

Another shaping process, Alignment, takes place, and Reinforcement Learning from Human Feedback (RLHF) is now widely used in fine-tuning, and relies on people who, knowingly or not, bring their own cultural norms, prejudices, and ideas of what is 'correct' to the party, which creates a yet another layer of moral guidelines.

According to Raffel et al. In 2020, a combination of these factors, tokenization, data and alignment, gives rise to a complex, layered framework of meaning. It turns out that algorithms don't reproduce linguistic patterns in a neutral way. They in fact construct a hierarchy of what's important and what isn't, which is influenced by technical decisions, cultural preferences and politics.

Methodological Orientation and Comparative Scope

Although this essay is primarily conceptual, it follows the logic of a comparative policy analysis. The selected cases—the United States, European Union, China, Russia, and Gulf States—represent distinct models of AI governance and media power:

1. The United States: Market-driven innovation; liberal discourse on freedom of expression; dominance of private tech giants.
2. China: State-oriented control; ideological alignment of datasets; strategic pursuit of technological self-reliance.
3. Russia: Hybrid authoritarian-informational model emphasizing sovereignty and disinformation resilience.
4. European Union: Normative regulation; pluralistic datasets; emphasis on ethics and transparency.
5. Gulf States: Tech-driven modernization and soft-power projection through Arabic-language AI initiatives.
6. Global South: knowledge collective and community-led

Each represents a different answer to a shared question: Who controls the epistemic infrastructures of AI? Their comparison allows us to discern global patterns in how nations “feed” algorithms to reinforce identity and legitimacy.

National Approaches to Algorithmic Sovereignty

The United States: Market Liberalism and Infrastructural Dominance

The United States remains the epicenter of AI innovation, hosting most leading model developers—OpenAI, Google DeepMind (originally British but absorbed into Alphabet), Anthropic, and Meta. are pushing the boundaries of what is known as the "epistemic environment". Or the rules that govern how we understand the world.

Its approach to AI reflects the broader American ideology of market-driven governance and corporate exceptionalism. The absence of a national data strategy has allowed private firms to accumulate immense training corpora, drawn largely from English-language internet sources.

This laissez-faire environment reinforces the soft power of U.S. culture in two ways. First, because global models are predominantly trained in English, they implicitly encode the cultural grammars of liberal democracy, individualism, and market rationality. Second, through platforms such as ChatGPT or Gemini, U.S. corporations export not only products but epistemological infrastructures—the ways of asking, answering, and valuing information. Third these companies have taken on a kind of de facto global standard-making role, through their exclusive control over safety protocols, proprietary datasets, and alignment rules. The US tech firms make decisions that define what is and isn't toxic, how safety filters work and which data sources are acceptable and the world starts to follow.

While the Biden administration’s Executive Order on the Safe, Secure, and Trustworthy Development of AI (2023) introduced principles of fairness, security, and accountability, it largely preserved the primacy of corporate actors. This aligns with America’s historical reliance on private soft power—the capacity of media and technology industries to globalize U.S. cultural norms without explicit state orchestration (Nye, 2004).

As argued by Nye (2024) this basically boils down to the privatization of soft power, US social norms and political systems are now spreading around the world through code, user interfaces and algorithmic settings, and this gives these corporations a form of infrastructural diplomacy. Rather than having to resort to traditional diplomatic

statements or treaties, these companies control the way the world goes about its business, which is usually referred to as a type of “platform diplomacy”.

In this context, “feeding the algorithm” occurs through data abundance rather than curation. The United States feeds the world’s AI systems by default, because its digital footprint dominates the global web. The resulting models reproduce Western-centric assumptions under the guise of universal rationality.

China: Algorithmic Nationalism and Ideological Alignment

China’s approach stands at the opposite pole. The 2023 Interim Measures for the Management of Generative Artificial Intelligence Services mandate that AI outputs “reflect socialist core values” and “avoid content subverting state power or harming national unity.” These regulations transform data governance into a mechanism of ideological discipline.

Chinese tech giants—Baidu (ERNIE Bot), Alibaba (Tongyi Qianwen), iFlytek, and Tencent—train their models primarily on domestic corpora, including state media archives, academic databases, and heavily moderated social platforms such as Weibo or WeChat. This ecosystem produces what could be described as algorithmic nationalism: an AI-mediated articulation of Chinese modernity that emphasizes harmony, stability, and collective progress.

The strategy serves multiple objectives. Domestically, it maintains narrative coherence across digital spheres; internationally, it projects an alternative epistemic model to the Western paradigm of liberal openness. By promoting Mandarin-language models and data localization, China asserts its technological sovereignty while cultivating a sphere of cultural influence in the Global South—particularly in Africa and Southeast Asia, where Chinese-funded digital infrastructure is expanding.

This form of algorithmic diplomacy merges propaganda, soft power, and infrastructure-building. The Chinese state does not simply feed AI with national data; it designs the nutritional regimen—deciding which values constitute healthy digital knowledge.

Russia: Informational Autarky and Strategic Insulation

In the wake of Western sanctions and the digital decoupling triggered by the invasion of Ukraine (2022), Russia has intensified efforts to build an autonomous AI

ecosystem. Models such as RuGPT and Sber AI are trained predominantly on Russian-language data drawn from domestic platforms (VK, Yandex) and state-owned news agencies (TASS, RIA Novosti).

This isolationist approach constitutes a form of informational autarky—an attempt to maintain control over public discourse by minimizing dependence on Western digital infrastructures. It reflects the Kremlin’s broader narrative of sovereign internet and *Russkii mir* (Russian world), wherein language and information are instruments of geopolitical unity.

From a communication-theoretical perspective, Russia’s strategy reveals a paradox. By restricting exposure to external sources, it safeguards narrative control but also constrains innovation, as LLM performance correlates with data diversity. Nonetheless, the political function is clear: to insulate domestic information flows from what Moscow portrays as “Western algorithmic imperialism.”

The Russian case thus exemplifies how algorithmic sovereignty can serve authoritarian resilience. AI is not merely a technological tool but a symbolic frontier in the reassertion of national identity under global pressure.

The European Union: Ethical Regulation and Pluralistic Autonomy

The European Union represents a distinct normative project, seeking to reconcile technological innovation with democratic values. Through the AI Act, the Digital Services Act, and the creation of European Data Spaces, the EU aspires to develop a “trustworthy” AI ecosystem grounded in transparency, accountability, and human rights.

Unlike the United States’ market logic or China’s ideological control, the EU’s approach centers on regulatory soft power (Bradford, 2020)—the export of ethical standards as a form of global influence. By setting high compliance requirements for any model operating within its market, the EU effectively externalizes its governance philosophy worldwide. This process, sometimes called the “Brussels effect,” extends European norms beyond Europe’s borders.

At the data level, initiatives such as AI4Media, Horizon Europe Data Spaces, and collaborations with European public broadcasters (EBU) aim to create diverse, multilingual training corpora. These efforts embody a vision of algorithmic pluralism—a counterweight to the Anglophone bias of global AI.

However, critics note a persistent dependency on U.S. cloud infrastructures and foundation models. Europe feeds AI with values rather than volume; it excels in normative design but lags in computational capacity. Nevertheless, its emphasis on transparency and inclusion establishes a moral framework that other regions increasingly emulate.

The Gulf States: Narrative Modernization and AI as Soft Power

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, particularly the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, have embraced AI as a pillar of their post-oil development visions. The Falcon LLM (developed by the UAE's Technology Innovation Institute) and Jais (a bilingual Arabic-English model produced in collaboration with G42 and Cerebras) signify an emerging ambition: to position the Arab world as an epistemic producer, not merely a consumer.

These models are trained on vast Arabic-language datasets, incorporating religious, literary, and contemporary media sources. The objective is twofold: to preserve linguistic heritage and to project a cosmopolitan image of the Gulf as a hub of innovation and moderation.

Through international partnerships—such as Abu Dhabi's collaborations with OpenAI and global universities—the region practices a form of techno-diplomacy that blends cultural identity with strategic branding. AI becomes both a tool of governance (enhancing state efficiency) and a medium of influence (reframing the Arab world's global image).

In contrast to the coercive or defensive stances of other powers, the Gulf approach is aspirational. It feeds the algorithm not only to assert control but to enter the global conversation—to ensure that Arabic voices shape the digital future.

Global South Pathways

Looking at the development of Artificial Intelligence in the Global South, we're seeing a challenge to the simplistic idea that there's a contest between Western and Chinese infrastructures. Coming from Africa, Latin America and South Asia, researchers are laying out new ways of understanding AI, that center on making sure everyone has a voice, participatory decision-making and kicking back against digital colonialism.

One great example of this is the Masakhane initiative, which showed us that a community-driven approach could add 100 languages to the global AI landscape, thanks to the hard work of Nekoto et al. In 2020. In Latin America, the data commons projects have been using decolonial methods to make knowledge collective and community-led, according to Villena et al. In '23.

These projects highlight that we're all about epistemic pluralism. We don't just copy-paste models from elsewhere, we're actually shaping the AI systems that will be used in our backyards, to reflect our cultures, histories and social realities.

From a global perspective, the digital divide highlights the potential for AI to harden pre-existing global hierarchies. However, as we have seen through the recent emergence of open-source AI models and collaborative NLP movements, such as Masakhane, alongside decolonial data efforts in Latin America, Africa, and South Asia, we are witnessing clear signs of a thriving ecosystem, and that the Global South will not be left behind in the AI revolution. Well-known initiatives and models like these enable underrepresented communities to co-create, curate, and manage their own datasets, create their own guidelines to follow, and feed in ideas born out of local cultures, and because they're completely open-source, we're no longer forced to run with the corporate giants. The Global South, Latin America, and South Asia have the ability to steer, in any direction, the fundamental theories that shape a thriving ecosystem.

Mechanisms of Algorithmic Influence

Across these cases, three primary mechanisms emerge through which nations "feed" AI systems to project influence.

Data Curation and Localization

The first mechanism concerns the selection and territorialization of data. States curate datasets that embody national values and restrict cross-border data flows through localization mandates. This strategy simultaneously safeguards privacy, supports domestic industry, and enforces epistemic boundaries.

For example:

- China's Data Security Law and Cybersecurity Law (2021) require that critical data be stored within national territory.
- The EU's GAIA-X and European Data Spaces initiatives aim to create interoperable but sovereign repositories.
- India's Bhashini platform, though not analyzed in depth here, reflects similar ambitions for linguistic sovereignty.

Localization transforms datasets into political borders. What enters an AI model—and what remains outside—becomes a question of national jurisdiction. In this way, data governance acts as cartography: drawing the informational boundaries of the state in the digital realm.

Model Alignment and Fine-Tuning

The second mechanism involves post-training alignment, where models are fine-tuned using reinforcement learning or curated examples to ensure compliance with national norms. Alignment serves as the digital equivalent of editorial oversight.

In authoritarian contexts, such as China or Russia, alignment enforces ideological conformity: models are prevented from generating dissenting or sensitive content. In liberal democracies, alignment often emphasizes safety, fairness, and non-discrimination, reflecting ethical pluralism rather than censorship.

The process is technically subtle but politically profound. It represents a shift from content regulation (monitoring what users publish) to model regulation (monitoring what machines can imagine). As alignment datasets increasingly determine the expressive boundaries of AI, they become instruments of normative power.

Narrative Seeding and Open-Source Ecosystems

A third, often overlooked mechanism is narrative seeding—the deliberate production of open-access materials designed to influence the knowledge base of AI models. It's not the same as disinformation. Which aims to manipulate human minds, but rather a planned system to distribute premeditated, news-style articles, policy briefs, and reports, which contain ideological content across the web.

Governments and related entities use mirrored domains, webpages and multilingual repositories to ensure these messages are disseminated. They bank on large web crawlers and pretraining of language models to stumble upon and process these texts, thereby training the language model.

By default many LLMs scrape from the open web, states and aligned actors can flood the digital commons with targeted content.

This may include digitized archives, state-sponsored research, or strategically framed media coverage. For instance:

- Western think tanks (RAND, Brookings, Atlantic Council) publish thousands of reports that LLMs later internalize as authoritative.
- Russian and Chinese outlets mirror their content across multiple domains to ensure web persistence.
- The U.S. and EU fund open datasets emphasizing democratic values, human rights, and transparency.

A characteristic of this narrative seeding isn't quantity, but a tangled web of redundancy. A single, well-prepped story can be reproduced over and over and posted across various sites, crushing the odds that it won't be found in the training corpus. As stated in research by Starbird et al in 2020, it's the repetition of a particular story that changes the pattern within a model to make it skewed in its understanding of the world, specifically on geopolitical disputes and historical events.

As AI systems now crave and digest larger volumes of machine-readable data. Databases, digitized archives and infographics formulated to be swallowed up by robots, this way of seeding stories is evolving. This isn't so much about shouting down a message, as it's about setting the building blocks of the foundation that AI will run off of. Coming from a background of rhetoric to being concerned with infrastructure, narrative power is changing how AI perceives global events. Narrative seeding thus represents a form of soft information warfare, operating not through disinformation but through information saturation. By shaping the corpus from which AI learns, actors influence the epistemic horizon of machine-generated knowledge.

AI Diplomacy and Multilateral Norm-Setting

Beyond national efforts, algorithmic influence unfolds through international organizations and standards bodies. The OECD Principles on AI (2019), the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI (2021), and the G7 Hiroshima Process (2023) each articulate global norms for responsible AI. Yet these initiatives also function as arenas of soft power, where states negotiate the moral parameters of the algorithmic order.

The European Union's leadership in ethical AI positions it as a normative power; China's participation underscores its desire for legitimacy; the United States frames openness as innovation; and the Gulf states advocate inclusion through cultural representation. Each contributes to a global conversation where legitimacy is increasingly encoded in technical protocols rather than diplomatic communiqués.

Security, Adversarial Manipulation & AI Resilience

Despite their sophistication, large language models remain vulnerable to adversarial manipulation that can compromise their integrity and reliability. Adversarial prompts can bypass safety controls, while carefully designed "jailbreaks" exploit latent weaknesses in alignment (Biggio & Roli, 2018). Yet the more insidious threat arises from data poisoning: the deliberate insertion of manipulated content into online spaces where web scrapers might later ingest it (Goldblum et al., 2022). Because pretraining datasets are vast and semi-opaque, even small quantities of such material can introduce subtle shifts in model behavior.

Securing AI systems therefore requires a holistic approach that extends far beyond patching vulnerabilities. Robust provenance tracking, continuous red-teaming, and behavioral audits must be integrated into development pipelines. Moreover, states must treat AI integrity as a national security priority, recognizing that vulnerabilities in training corpora or alignment procedures can translate into vulnerabilities in democratic discourse.

Discussion: From Propaganda to Protocols

The Structural Shift of Influence

Traditional propaganda sought to persuade audiences; algorithmic diplomacy seeks to preconfigure them. Influence is relocated from message to medium, from rhetoric

to architecture. The decisive act is not the broadcast but the training. Whoever shapes the training corpus shapes the conditions of intelligibility itself.

This marks a transition from communicative to computational hegemony. Power operates through the infrastructure of prediction. In this sense, AI models are not merely tools of communication—they are technological publics, aggregating human expression into algorithmic norms.

In terms of algorithmic diplomacy, one of the most striking things is how feeding the algorithm is starting to blur the lines between soft and hard power, a difference that was previously relatively clear. Military forces around the world have been ramping up the use of large-scale artificial intelligence models to manage everything from intelligence fusion and targeting, satellite image analysis, cyber defense automation, to war games simulations, and they're counting on these systems to be accurate and reliable, and as we know, the accuracy of these systems is largely influenced by the quality, origin, and perspective of the data.

Countries with the ability to command the flow of data can, in effect, fine-tune their operations, and possess a strategic superiority. In the use of force, the decisions made about how and when military forces are utilized are now under influence, with a false or skewed danger assessment potentially decimating the lives of thousands, but precision-crafted national data, however, elevates early warning systems, autonomous navigation and decision aid systems. No wonder that algorithmic force is now entrenched in the organizational structures of nations. As AI systems used by the military start to rely on civilian-supplied models, nations are facing a very serious threat.

The end result of feeding AI isn't that the physical application of force is being replaced, but that it is changing the way we see, schedule, and justify the use of force within the military's decision-making process.

Algorithmic Enclaves

Ideological beliefs and regional data policies are in place, they can create AI systems that look at the world very differently, when different regulatory systems. Coming hotfooting from the West, liberal democracies have a completely different idea of the way things work, than countries like China or Russia, who have more tightly controlled data sets, as shown by Kalluri back in '20. Well-known problems can be seen as less important

in one place and completely devastating in another, and as DeNardis pointed out, this fragmentation mirrors the way countries are divided, often in a predictable way.

If we don't do anything, these AI systems can develop into self-sufficient, hard-to-change "enclaves" that won't allow for a common understanding and could make diplomacy extremely difficult. To prevent this from happening we need international agreements on transparency, regional cooperation, and testing the accuracy of AI, all of which will help sort out what works and what doesn't in the field of AI.

Ethical and Democratic Implications

The embedding of national narratives into AI raises urgent ethical questions. Can a system trained on state-curated data ever produce pluralistic outputs? How can citizens evaluate the ideological provenance of machine-generated information? If epistemic sovereignty becomes the organizing principle of AI governance, global communication risks fragmenting into insulated algorithmic spheres.

At the same time, total openness is not a panacea: unregulated data scraping perpetuates colonial hierarchies and infringes on individual rights. The challenge, therefore, lies in balancing sovereignty with solidarity—designing AI systems that respect cultural specificity without reproducing digital nationalism.

Toward an Epistemic Multilateralism

One potential solution is epistemic multilateralism: collaborative governance of AI data at regional or global scales. Initiatives such as the EU–African Union data partnerships, or UNESCO's global observatory on AI ethics, hint at a model of shared stewardship. These frameworks could promote diverse training datasets representing multiple linguistic, cultural, and ideological perspectives, ensuring that global AI systems reflect the plurality of human experience.

When looking to govern the rapidly evolving field of artificial intelligence, a global agreement seems to be the holy grail, but in the short term, the best option for AI governance is essentially to set up smaller-scale, minilateral or coalition-based frameworks, which have already started to take shape in the likes of the G7 Hiroshima Process, the

OECD Principles on AI, UNESCO's Recommendation on the Ethics of AI and the EU-US Trade and Technology Council.

These regional arrangements, though, require technologically aligned countries, and can run into roadblocks. The starkly different regulatory approaches of liberal democracies and authoritarian regimes, the intense competition between the US and China, and countries now viewing AI as a matter of national security, can all be insurmountable hurdles.

Consequently, progress in AI governance will be uneven, hailing from lots of different directions, and primarily regional.

For media scholars, this suggests a new research agenda: tracing how international communication is reconfigured through machine learning, and how cultural diplomacy adapts to an environment where the algorithm is the message.

AI-Mediated Influence Operations

They took the concept of digital influence to a new level, when generative AI systems became a reality. Coming hotfooting off the heels of this technology, AI systems can now create clear, clever and tailor-made messages that can deceive people into thinking they're hearing from someone they know, which makes it difficult to tell what's real and what's not.

Paired with artificial personas, networks of robots, and pinpoint targeting, AI systems can keep up the pressure of their campaigns by changing them as the news unfolds. NATO's Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence (2023) says that these kinds of operations don't aim to immediately convince people of anything, but instead, they wear down people's trust in the media, governments, and each other. Well-known problems in the digital world, influence operations can be so subtle that people may not even notice that the way they form their opinions has been quietly influenced by algorithms. What makes this threat unique is how simple it is to get started. All the tools you need are becoming cheaper, more accessible and more effective, so we're likely to see a lot more AI-facilitated propaganda in the years to come.

Looking at the rapidly changing world of global politics and international affairs, a term has been introduced: epistemic multipolarity. This basically means that countries

are taking charge of their own data, and sending the future of global control into a completely new direction.

We're seeing this play out in the contrasting roles of the US and China, and in their artificial intelligence systems, we can get a glimpse of the real character of the countries they represent. But it's security, power, and governance that will be at the heart of their disagreements, something they couldn't possibly agree on coming from such vastly different perspectives, and are virtually guaranteed to be poles apart. They'll also have completely opposing views on the state of the world and how to sort out the problems they both face, and because of this, they'll likely be at odds on more critical subjects such as climate change, refugee crises, and pandemics. Well-known questions will also be raised about what's the difference between hard and soft power.

The way we program our AIs is sending us down a very important path. Shaping how we're directed, and under what circumstances we go to war. We're not just painting a picture of how people perceive the world; we're fundamentally redefining the principles of international cooperation and forcing scholars to start looking at the root of the information economy.

Conclusion: The Algorithm as Arena of Global Communication

Artificial intelligence has emerged as both a medium and a message of globalization. Its infrastructures—servers, datasets, and models—constitute the invisible backbone of contemporary knowledge production. Yet these infrastructures are not neutral. They are socially produced, politically regulated, and strategically contested. As this essay has argued, nations are increasingly aware that what machines learn determines what societies know.

The notion of feeding the algorithm captures the deliberate and strategic ways in which states, corporations, and transnational actors attempt to shape the epistemic diets of LLMs. From the laissez-faire abundance of the United States to the normative regulation of the European Union, from China's ideological alignment to Russia's autarkic insulation and the Gulf's narrative modernization, the global AI landscape resembles an emerging epistemic multipolarity.

In this environment, algorithmic diplomacy becomes the new frontier of global media and communication. It operates through standards, data governance, and

infrastructural alliances rather than overt persuasion. Influence is encoded not in messages but in models; power is exercised through training corpora and alignment procedures that define what counts as credible, relevant, or acceptable.

This shift from propaganda to protocols transforms the study of communication itself. To analyze the global circulation of meaning, scholars must now interrogate the hidden layers of AI—its datasets, annotation practices, and regulatory frameworks. The newsroom of the future may be written in code, but the contest over truth remains profoundly human.

It's becoming very clear that we need more cooperative governance, when AI systems are mediating the bulk of political communication and rational thought in our society. One approach to this challenge, Epistemic Multilateralism, suggests a way to reconcile the need for sovereignty and interoperability.

Instead of forcing a uniform epistemological framework or retreating into isolated, separate systems, Epistemic Multilateralism calls for shared structures, such as joint datasets, clear annotation guidelines, and cross-regional review bodies, which ensure that different information systems can be understood and respected.

A concept that was explored by Couldry & Mejias back in 2019 and Milan & Treré in 2020. This isn't just about technicalities, it is, fundamentally, a political process that has the ability to maintain and support our fragile, yet interconnected global communication landscape.

The future of global communication will depend on our ability to design AI systems that balance sovereignty with openness, diversity with accountability, and automation with democratic deliberation. Without such balance, the world risks fragmenting into algorithmic enclaves—each trained to recognize only its own truths.

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