

## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AS A TOOL OF POWER IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### ШТУЧНИЙ ІНТЕЛЕКТ ЯК ІНСТРУМЕНТ СИЛИ В МІЖНАРОДНИХ ВІДНОСИНАХ

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**Abstract.** *This article explores artificial intelligence (AI) as a transformative tool of power in international relations, reshaping traditional dimensions of hard, soft, sharp, and smart power. AI enhances military and economic capabilities, promotes cultural narratives, enables disinformation campaigns, and integrates strategic influence. The U.S. and China lead in leveraging AI for geopolitical dominance, while the EU emphasizes ethical regulation, and Global South nations like India and Saudi Arabia use AI for regional influence. The article highlights AI's dual nature as a "two-faced Janus," offering opportunities for both major powers and smaller actors while posing risks of destabilization and technological divides. Through case studies, such as Israel's Operation "Rising Lion," and analyses of global AI trends, the study underscores AI's role in creating cognitive power and redefining global leadership. It concludes that AI's democratization of power and ethical challenges necessitate international cooperation to manage its geopolitical impact.*

**Keywords:** *Artificial Intelligence, International Relations, Hard Power, Soft Power, Sharp Power, Smart Power, Geopolitics, Cognitive Power, Technological Hegemony.*

**Анотація.** *Стаття досліджує штучний інтелект (ШІ) як трансформаційний інструмент сили в міжнародних відносинах, що змінює традиційні виміри жорсткої, м'якої, гострої та розумної сили. ШІ посилює військові та економічні можливості, сприяє культурним наративам, уможливорює дезінформаційні кампанії та інтегрує стратегічний вплив. США та Китай лідирують у використанні ШІ для геополітичного домінування, ЄС акцентує на етичному регулюванні, а країни Глобального Півдня, як Індія та Саудівська Аравія, застосовують ШІ для регіонального впливу. Стаття підкреслює двоїсту природу ШІ як "дволикого Януса", що пропонує можливості для великих і малих акторів, але створює ризики дестабілізації та технологічного розриву. Через кейс-стаді, як-от операція Ізраїлю*

*“Висхідний Лев”, та аналіз глобальних тенденцій ШІ, дослідження наголошує на ролі ШІ у створенні когнітивної сили та переосмисленні глобального лідерства. Воно робить висновок, що демократизація ШІ та етичні виклики потребують міжнародної співпраці для управління його геополітичним впливом.*

**Ключові слова:** *штучний інтелект, міжнародні відносини, жорстка сила, м'яка сила, гостра сила, розумна сила, геополітика, когнітивна сила, технологічна гегемонія.*

**Introduction.** Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly reshaping the landscape of international relations, emerging as a transformative instrument of power that redefines traditional notions of geopolitical influence. From bolstering military and economic capabilities to shaping cultural narratives and enabling disinformation campaigns, AI offers new opportunities for both state and non-state actors. This article examines how leading powers, such as the United States and China, harness AI to strengthen their geopolitical dominance, while other regions, including the EU and Global South nations, adapt it to pursue their strategic objectives. Special focus is placed on AI's dual nature, which simultaneously democratizes power and introduces challenges related to ethical dilemmas and risks of destabilization. Through case studies and analyses of global trends, the study illuminates how AI is forging cognitive power and reshaping the paradigm of global leadership.

**The purpose of the article** is to analyze artificial intelligence (AI) as a transformative instrument of power in international relations, redefining traditional dimensions of hard, soft, sharp, and smart power. The article seeks to elucidate how AI shapes geopolitical dynamics by enhancing military, economic, and cultural capabilities while posing ethical and destabilization risks. Through case studies and analysis of global trends, the study evaluates AI's role in forging cognitive power, reshaping global leadership, and highlighting the need for international cooperation to manage its geopolitical impact.

**Literature review.** The study of artificial intelligence (AI) as a tool of power in international relations has gained significant attention in recent academic literature, reflecting its transformative impact on geopolitics. Joseph Nye's concept of soft power (2011) provides a foundation for understanding AI's role in shaping cultural and ideological influence, while his later work on smart power (2013) highlights the integration of hard and soft power, a framework increasingly relevant to AI's multifaceted applications. Scholars like Khaustova and Reshetniak (2023) emphasize AI's role in enhancing military capabilities, particularly in intelligence analysis and autonomous systems, as seen in Israel's Operation “Rising Lion” against Iran. Global Voices reports (2024) underscore AI's use in sharp power, detailing how governments employ AI for disinformation and population monitoring, raising ethical concerns. Dubovsky (2024) explores AI's dual role in cybersecurity, enabling both advanced threat detection and novel cyberattacks. The Stanford University AI Index (2025) highlights the U.S. and China's dominance in AI development, with 40 and 15 significant AI models produced in 2024, respectively, underscoring their technological rivalry. Studies by Oxford Insights (2024) and RAND (2023) address the technological divide, noting that countries like Chad, Somalia, and Belarus lag due to inadequate infrastructure and sanctions. The EU's AI Act (2024) is frequently cited as a soft power tool, establishing global ethical standards, as discussed by European scholars. Indian researchers (2023) highlight India's multivector diplomacy, leveraging AI through U.S. partnerships like the Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies. Global South nations, such as Saudi Arabia and Malaysia, are noted for using AI to diversify economies and enhance regional influence, per the Global AI Index (2024). Conversely, NPR (2025) and RAND (2023) warn of AI-driven risks, including cognitive warfare and a potential “technological cold war” between the U.S. and China. Collectively, the literature portrays AI as a “force multiplier” that redefines power dynamics, democratizes influence, and poses ethical and regulatory challenges, necessitating global cooperation.

**Methods.** In international relations, power is a key concept that defines the ability of states or other actors to influence the behaviour of others to achieve their own objectives. Traditionally, power is categorized into several types: hard power, soft power, sharp power, and smart power. Artificial intelligence (AI) plays an increasingly significant role in shaping and implementing these forms of power, transforming international politics through its technological capabilities. This article examines

the role of AI as a tool of power in international relations, capable of influencing and reshaping the roles of international actors. The authors employ abstract-logical methods, case study approaches, axiological, empirical, statistical, and structural-functional analyses.

**Main results of research.** Considering the aforementioned types of power, hard power is based on coercion, implemented through military or economic might. It encompasses the use of armed forces, economic sanctions, financial pressure, or other tools to achieve political objectives. AI significantly enhances states' hard power by providing new tools for military and economic operations. In the military domain, AI is utilized for developing autonomous weapon systems, analysing intelligence data, predicting threats, and conducting cyberattacks. For instance, AI is employed to forecast threats to information security, process vast datasets, and identify patterns beyond human capabilities.

For example, in June 2025, Israel, with a population of 9.5 million, applied hard power against Iran, with a population of 92.4 million, through Operation "Rising Lion." Israel struck Iran's nuclear and military facilities, disrupting Tehran's nuclear program and weakening its regional influence. The elimination of key IRGC commanders and the destruction of proxy forces, such as Hezbollah, solidified Israel's position as a military leader. These actions altered the geopolitical landscape, weakening Iran, causing a surge in oil prices, and complicating nuclear diplomacy. The United States supported Israel, also striking Iran's nuclear facilities, but sought de-escalation. Without political consolidation of Israel's gains, the region risks further escalation, underscoring the fragility of the Middle Eastern balance of power.

Based on general assumptions about Israel's modern military technologies, such as intelligence analysis, cyber operations, and strike planning, it is plausible that AI played a supporting role in Israel's application of hard power against Iran in Operation "Rising Lion," enhancing intelligence gathering, cyberattacks, and strike coordination. AI algorithms likely processed intelligence data, coordinated attacks on nuclear facilities, and tracked IRGC commanders, providing Israel with a technological edge. Iran's limited use of AI, due to a technological gap, highlighted its vulnerability. This demonstrates the growing role of AI in geopolitical conflicts. Notably, Khaustova V.Ye. and Reshetniak O.I. emphasize that AI is a key priority for the development of defence complexes in many countries, as it enables the automation of decision-making processes and enhances the efficiency of military operations (*Khaustova, Reshetnyak, 2022*).

Economic hard power is also being transformed by AI. AI algorithms are used to analyze market trends, predict economic risks, and automate financial processes, enabling states to more effectively implement sanctions or economic pressure. For instance, AI optimizes the management of financial flows and detects fraudulent schemes, thereby strengthening states' economic security.

Soft power, as conceptualized by Joseph Nye, involves influence through the appeal of culture, values, ideology, or lifestyle, encouraging others to voluntarily support a state's objectives. AI plays a significant role in shaping soft power by creating narratives and personalizing information influence. For example, AI is used to analyse audience preferences and create personalized content on platforms like Netflix, YouTube, and Facebook, promoting cultural products and values. According to a Global Voices report, governments and corporations leverage AI to craft narratives that present technology as a tool of progress, enhancing a state's image as a technological leader (*Civic Media Observatory..., 2025*).

Additionally, AI is applied in education and international cooperation, key aspects of soft power. For instance, AI assistants in educational programs increase access to learning, promoting countries' educational initiatives. In the context of Ukraine, AI is used to develop educational platforms that popularize digital technologies, bolstering the country's image as an innovative nation (*Parkhomchuk, Koppel, Parkhomchuk, 2024*).

Sharp power involves manipulative influence through disinformation, propaganda, or cyberattacks aimed at undermining trust in democratic institutions or societal stability. AI is a powerful tool for sharp power, enabling the creation and dissemination of disinformation with unprecedented efficiency. AI algorithms can generate fake texts, images, or videos (deepfakes) used to manipulate public opinion. The Global Voices report highlights that AI is often employed for automated population monitoring and restricting citizens' political participation, a hallmark of sharp

power. For example, AI systems can analyse social media to detect opposition sentiments and create targeted information campaigns (*Civic Media Observatory, 2025*).

Moreover, AI is used in cybersecurity to develop sophisticated cyberattacks that can destabilize state infrastructure. An article by O. Dubovsky notes that AI helps predict cyber threats and develop rapid responses but can also be used to create new types of attacks (*Dubovsky, 2024*).

Smart power combines hard and soft power, allowing states to flexibly adapt strategies to specific circumstances. AI is an ideal tool for implementing smart power, as it enables the integration of various influence mechanisms. For instance, AI can simultaneously analyse economic data for sanctions (hard power) and create appealing cultural products to promote a state's image (soft power). AI also helps states adapt to new challenges, such as ethical dilemmas or socio-economic transformations.

Artificial intelligence has become a key tool in international relations, enabling countries to demonstrate power through technological superiority, economic influence, military might, and information operations. In 2025, several countries stand out for their use of AI as a tool of power, including the United States, China, the European Union (notably France and Germany), India, Russia, and some Global South nations.

The United States remains a leader in AI development and implementation, driven by a robust ecosystem of technology companies (OpenAI, Google, Microsoft) and significant investments in research and development. According to Stanford University's 2025 AI Index, American institutions developed 40 significant AI models in 2024, accounting for the largest share globally (*Stanford University, 2025*).

The United States leverages AI as a tool of hard power in the defence sector, particularly for autonomous systems, cybersecurity, and intelligence analysis. For example, the Pentagon funds projects using AI for decision-making in crisis situations, such as preventing nuclear conflicts. Through soft power, the U.S. promotes its image as a technological leader via AI innovations, with companies like OpenAI setting standards for generative AI. In terms of sharp power, AI is used to counter disinformation and cyberattacks, though the U.S. faces challenges in regulating AI, which may impact its ability to effectively utilize this technology. U.S. leadership in AI compels other countries to either collaborate (e.g., through initiatives like the International Network of AI Safety Institutes) or compete by investing in their own AI programs to avoid technological dependence.

China is the primary competitor to the U.S. in AI, rapidly closing the technological gap. According to Stanford's 2025 AI Index, China developed 15 significant AI models in 2024, with DeepSeek's R1 model matching the performance of OpenAI's ChatGPT at a lower cost (*Stanford University, 2025*). China employs AI as a tool for demonstrating hard, soft, smart, and sharp power. As a hard power tool, AI is integrated into military systems, with China's "civil-military integration" strategy enabling the consolidation of resources to develop advanced AI systems. As a soft power tool, China promotes AI through investments in Global South countries, such as Malaysia and African nations, strengthening economic and technological ties.

China's use of AI as a smart power tool exemplifies the combination of technological innovation with strategic global influence. China actively integrates AI into both aspects, using it to enhance economic, political, and cultural influence while bolstering national security. China employs AI as a smart power tool by investing significant resources in AI development, aiming to become a global leader in the field by 2030. AI is used to modernize the economy, increase productivity, and enhance competitiveness. For instance, companies like Baidu, Alibaba, and Tencent develop AI solutions for cloud computing, e-commerce, and financial technologies, strengthening China's economic influence. Alibaba uses AI to optimize logistics and personalize shopping experiences, facilitating the global expansion of its services. This enables China to promote its technologies in markets across Asia, Africa, and Europe, fostering economic dependence on Chinese platforms (*McKinsey & Company..., 2023*).

China also uses AI to promote its culture and image through digital platforms. For example, AI is employed to create content that popularizes Chinese culture (films, music, games) and to analyse social media to shape a positive image of the country abroad. The platform Douyin (internationally known as TikTok) uses AI to personalize content, promoting Chinese culture among global youth. AI

algorithms analyse user preferences, subtly fostering a positive perception of China (*Center for Strategic and International Studies...*, 2024).

Within the Belt and Road Initiative, China employs AI to optimize infrastructure projects, logistics, and trade, enhancing its economic influence in partner countries. AI technologies enable China to offer “smart cities” and digital infrastructure, increasing countries’ reliance on Chinese technology. Notably, in Pakistan, China implements AI systems to manage “smart ports” within the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, strengthening economic ties and geopolitical influence (*Brookings Institution...*, 2024).

China invests in AI education, creating new programs and attracting global talent. This enables the country not only to develop its own technologies but also to influence global AI standards through training specialists. AI as a tool of sharp power is used for population monitoring and creating disinformation campaigns, raising concerns about its impact on democratic processes in other countries. China’s success in AI, particularly holding 70% of global AI patents in 2023, has prompted countries like India to impose restrictions on Chinese technologies (e.g., banning 59 Chinese apps in 2020) or seek alternative partnerships with the U.S (Goldman Sachs, 2023).

The European Union (notably France and Germany), India, and Russia also strive to leverage AI as a tool for all aforementioned types of power in international relations. The EU positions itself as a leader in ethical AI regulation, a form of soft power. In 2024, the EU adopted the AI Act, establishing safety and risk-based AI management standards that influence global norms. France and Germany play key roles in this process. India actively develops AI within its “multivector diplomacy,” aiming to become a technological hub for the Global South. India establishes centers of excellence and AI retraining programs, positioning itself as a leader in software development. Through the Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (2023), India deepens technological cooperation with the U.S., enhancing its defence capabilities (*Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India...*, 2023). The 2020 ban on Chinese apps reflects India’s pursuit of technological autonomy, impacting its relations with China.

AI is a transformative technology reshaping the geopolitical landscape by providing countries with new opportunities to enhance their power in international relations. In the future, countries that invest in AI, develop infrastructure, human capital, and regulatory frameworks will gain a significant advantage. Conversely, countries that fail to adapt to technological changes risk falling behind. Countries likely to gain power through AI include the U.S., China, the EU, India, and certain Global South nations (Saudi Arabia, UAE, Malaysia, South Africa), as they invest in research, infrastructure, and education while using AI for economic, military, and diplomatic influence. Their success stems from access to resources, robust regulatory frameworks, and international cooperation. Meanwhile, countries like Russia, some African and Latin American nations, and parts of Eastern Europe may lag due to sanctions, economic instability, weak infrastructure, and insufficient investment, exacerbating the technological divide with long-term consequences for their global influence.

AI thus redefines the concept of power in international relations, encompassing hard, soft, sharp, and smart power. Its impact on the global geopolitical map manifests through the strengthening of technologically advanced nations, the rise of regional influence among new actors, the widening technological gap, and the formation of new alliances and conflicts. AI consolidates power in the hands of states with advanced technological infrastructure, such as the U.S., China, and EU countries. These nations leverage AI to enhance all types of power, contributing to a bipolar or multipolar world where technological superiority determines global influence.

Global South countries like India, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, and South Africa use AI to bolster regional influence, reshaping traditional centers of power. India positions itself as a technological hub for the Global South through IT sector development and U.S. collaboration (Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies, 2023), enabling influence over South Asia and Africa. Saudi Arabia leads in government AI strategy per the Global AI Index (2024), investing in AI infrastructure to diversify its economy. Malaysia’s National Artificial Intelligence Roadmap and South Africa’s AI Institute foster regional leadership through partnerships with global players like Google and Microsoft (*Tortoise Media*, 2024). This results in a geopolitical shift toward Global South nations emerging as new technological hubs and forming regional alliances, such as through the African Union or ASEAN, reducing dependence on traditional power centers.

AI deepens the technological divide between developed and developing nations, such as certain African countries (Chad, Somalia), Latin American nations (Venezuela, Bolivia), and Eastern European states (Belarus). The Oxford Insights report (2024) indicates that countries with low digitalization levels have limited access to AI technologies due to inadequate infrastructure and education. In Africa, only select countries like South Africa can invest in AI, while others rely on foreign aid. In Latin America, political instability in Venezuela and Bolivia limits AI investment. In Eastern Europe, Belarus lags due to sanctions and IT talent drain. This leads to increased inequality in international relations, with technologically weaker nations becoming dependent on AI technology imports, heightening economic and political vulnerabilities that may spark new conflicts or exploitation.

AI drives changes in the geopolitical landscape, fostering new alliances and conflicts related to control over technologies and data. Regarding alliances, the U.S., EU, and India collaborate through initiatives like AI Safety Institutes to counter Chinese influence. An NPR report (2025) notes that countries are uniting to establish ethical AI standards. Competition between the U.S. and China for AI dominance could lead to a “technological cold war.” A RAND report (2023) warns of the risk of escalating cyber conflicts driven by AI (*RAND Corporation, 2023*).

**Conclusions.** In 2025, the United States and China remain the primary actors in leveraging AI as a tool of power, influencing other actors’ behaviour through technological leadership and competition. The EU demonstrates power through regulatory influence and ethical standards, while India and other Global South countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, and South Africa, use AI for economic and regional influence. Russia focuses on military and information operations but lags in innovation. These countries are shaping a new geopolitical reality where AI is a key determinant of power, compelling other actors to cooperate, compete, or adapt.

The uniqueness of AI as a tool of power in international relations lies in its ability to simultaneously transform traditional dimensions of power (economic, military, diplomatic) and create new, unprecedented forms of influence. Unlike traditional tools of power, such as nuclear weapons or economic sanctions, AI acts as a “force multiplier,” enhancing all aspects of geopolitical dominance while democratizing access to power, making it more dispersed and unpredictable. From this perspective, AI can be viewed as a “two-faced Janus” in international relations, uniting and dividing the world. In Roman mythology, Janus, the god with two faces looking in opposite directions, symbolizes beginnings and endings, peace and war, opportunities and threats. AI reflects this duality: it optimizes supply chains and predicts market trends, enabling countries like the U.S. and China to rapidly accumulate resources for geopolitical influence. Autonomous systems, such as drones or cyberweapons, change the rules of warfare, where algorithmic speed surpasses human decision-making. AI analytics predict state behaviour, allowing actors to anticipate rivals’ moves, akin to a chess game with an artificial grandmaster.

AI is a “two-faced Janus” that strengthens the hegemony of major powers while offering opportunities to weaker players. For instance, Israel uses AI for cyberdefense, competing with superpowers, but AI in the hands of non-state actors risks chaos. This paradox makes AI a unique tool that stabilizes (for the strong) and destabilizes (for the weak) the international order.

AI introduces a new type of power—cognitive power—based on manipulating information and public consciousness. Deepfake algorithms, targeted propaganda, and social media sentiment analysis enable states to shape narratives influencing elections, protests, or even revolutions. Unlike traditional soft power (culture, ideology), AI offers personalized, automated, and rapid influence that is hard to trace. AI acts as an “invisible puppeteer” controlling global narratives. For example, imagine a scenario where AI generates a fake video of a country’s leader, sparking an international scandal within hours. This is no longer mere propaganda but a “cognitive war” where reality becomes malleable. Paradoxically, AI also helps combat such threats by detecting fakes, making it both a sword and a shield.

AI lowers barriers to accessing tools of power. While nuclear weapons or aircraft carriers were the prerogative of superpowers, AI tools (e.g., open-source algorithms or cloud computing) are accessible even to small nations. This democratization makes AI unique, as power no longer depends solely on resources or military size—a hacker with a laptop and AI can inflict damage comparable to

a state's actions. AI is the “Pandora's box” of international relations, enabling terrorist groups or small countries to launch cyberattacks or information campaigns that rival superpowers.

AI creates a new form of hegemony—technological—where control over data, algorithms, and standards determines global leadership. The U.S. and China compete for AI patents and standards, akin to the 19th-century struggle for colonial territories.

Simultaneously, AI poses unprecedented ethical dilemmas: Who is responsible for autonomous weapons' decisions? How can AI manipulating consciousness be regulated? AI is the “philosopher's stone” of modern politics, promising unlimited power but capable of destroying its creator.

Paradoxically, AI can address global challenges (e.g., climate change) while creating new ones (e.g., autonomous wars), embodying a dual nature—both a blessing and a curse. AI is a “digital genie” that grants wishes but at a cost. For instance, African countries can use AI to optimize agriculture, but reliance on U.S. or Chinese platforms makes them vulnerable to external pressure. The paradox is that AI promises freedom but can impose new technological shackles.

AI resembles a mythical three-headed serpent: one head offers progress, another control, and the third chaos. In international relations, AI is not just a tool but a new arena of struggle, where victory depends on who harnesses its potential fastest.

AI is an ideal tool for implementing smart power, as it integrates various influence mechanisms. For example, AI can simultaneously analyze economic data for sanctions (hard power) and create appealing cultural products to promote a state's image (soft power). AI also helps states adapt to new challenges, such as ethical dilemmas or socio-economic transformations.

Artificial intelligence transforms all types of power in international relations, providing states with new tools for coercion, attraction, manipulation, and adaptive influence. In hard power, AI enhances military and economic capabilities; in soft power, it promotes cultural and educational initiatives; in sharp power, it facilitates manipulative influence through disinformation; and in smart power, it ensures strategic flexibility and efficiency. However, AI also poses ethical, legal, and security challenges, necessitating international regulation and cooperation.

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