

Beyond Sovereign Security

Artificial Intelligence and the Geopolitics of Intelligence

1. Introduction

The Industrial Revolution transformed the production and movement of physical goods. The Information Age transformed the production and movement of information. The Intelligence Age is transforming the production and movement of knowledge, judgement and decisions.

Artificial intelligence is becoming a foundational capability of modern civilisation. It is increasingly embedded within the systems that govern economies, operate critical infrastructure, support military capability, conduct scientific research and enable everyday life. As intelligence becomes infrastructure, its security becomes a matter of strategic importance.

Throughout history, societies have depended upon successive layers of infrastructure. Transport enabled the movement of people and goods. Energy enabled industrialisation. Communications enabled the exchange of information. Computing enabled the processing of information at unprecedented scale. Artificial intelligence introduces a new layer. It enables the creation, interpretation and application of intelligence itself.

This transition raises questions that extend well beyond technology. If intelligence becomes fundamental to the functioning of modern societies, what does it mean to secure it? What capabilities must nations possess? Which capabilities can be shared through trusted partnerships? And how does the emergence of intelligence as infrastructure reshape the relationship between economic prosperity, national security and international cooperation? Structural forces are reshaping security, sovereignty and international relations as intelligence becomes a strategic capability.

2. From Infrastructure to Security

Infrastructure creates dependency. Dependency creates strategic risk. At national scale, artificial intelligence is becoming an enabling layer upon which governments, institutions and industries increasingly depend.

Governments already rely upon digital systems to manage taxation, healthcare, transport, financial regulation, emergency response and defence. Private industry depends upon intelligent systems to optimise supply chains, operate energy networks, develop pharmaceuticals, manage financial markets and design advanced engineering systems. As artificial intelligence becomes integrated across these domains, the security of intelligence itself becomes inseparable from the security of the systems it supports.

Infrastructure has always required protection. Roads, ports, electricity networks and telecommunications are all recognised as strategic national assets because society depends upon them. Cognitive infrastructure deserves similar consideration. The strategic question is therefore no longer simply how nations adopt artificial intelligence, but how they ensure that the intelligence upon which society increasingly depends remains available, resilient and trusted.

3. The Sovereign Intelligence Stack

Artificial intelligence does not exist as a single technology. It is the product of an ecosystem whose components include energy, semiconductors, compute, communications networks, data, models, human expertise, governance and capital. Strength in one layer cannot fully compensate for weakness in another.

Different nations and regions will pursue different approaches. Some may seek broad domestic capability. Others may participate in trusted international ecosystems, sharing resources and expertise while maintaining resilience in strategically important areas. There is no single model for sovereign capability.

The strategic objective is not complete self-sufficiency, but sufficient control and resilience to ensure that critical national functions cannot be arbitrarily disrupted, compromised or denied.

4. Artificial Intelligence and National Power

Artificial intelligence is unusual because it amplifies almost every other source of national power simultaneously. Throughout history, technological leadership has shaped national power. Steam power transformed industrial capability. Electricity transformed manufacturing. Aviation transformed warfare. Computing transformed administration. Artificial intelligence has the potential to influence each of these simultaneously.

Economic productivity, scientific discovery, industrial competitiveness, military effectiveness and governmental capability increasingly depend upon the effective application of intelligence. Artificial intelligence does not replace these capabilities. It amplifies them. For this reason, intelligence is becoming a strategic resource alongside energy, finance, manufacturing capacity and communications infrastructure.

5. Security in the Intelligence Age

Every major technology strengthens both defenders and attackers. Artificial intelligence is no exception. Its impact extends beyond autonomous systems or advanced weapons. It has the potential to increase the scale, speed and sophistication of cyber operations, information campaigns, industrial espionage and criminal activity. It may enable faster discovery of software vulnerabilities, more convincing social engineering, more sophisticated misinformation and increasingly automated forms of attack.

Equally, artificial intelligence strengthens defence. It can improve cyber resilience, accelerate intelligence analysis, support emergency response, optimise logistics, enhance military planning and strengthen the operation of critical infrastructure.

The strategic challenge is therefore not whether artificial intelligence is inherently beneficial or harmful. It is that societies are becoming increasingly dependent upon a capability whose benefits and risks both scale rapidly.

Security in the Intelligence Age requires not only protecting physical assets and digital networks, but ensuring the integrity, resilience and trusted operation of the intelligence systems upon which they increasingly rely.

6. Intelligence Beyond Borders

Sovereignty has traditionally been territorial. Artificial intelligence is not. This creates a structural tension between political organisation and technological reality.

Models may be developed in one country, trained in another, deployed globally and continuously improved through international collaboration. Compute infrastructure, cloud services, communications networks, open-source software, scientific research and investment capital increasingly operate across national boundaries.

This creates an important tension. Sovereignty remains organised around geography. Intelligence increasingly operates through global networks.

The response is unlikely to be complete national independence, nor unrestricted global interdependence. Instead, nations and regions are likely to explore different balances between sovereign capability, trusted alliances and international cooperation. Artificial intelligence therefore raises questions not only about national resilience, but about the future organisation of the international system itself.

7. Beyond Sovereign Security

Every major technological revolution has required societies to rethink the foundations of security. Industrial societies secured energy. Information societies secured communications. The Intelligence Age requires societies to consider how intelligence itself should be secured. Artificial intelligence is not simply another digital technology. It is becoming part of the infrastructure upon which economies, governments and societies increasingly depend.

This transformation raises profound strategic questions. How should intelligence be governed? Which capabilities should nations retain directly, and which can be shared through trusted international partnerships? How should societies balance openness, innovation and resilience?

Beyond sovereign security lies a broader question. The modern international system is built upon sovereign states. Yet intelligence increasingly transcends national borders. As cognition becomes globally distributed infrastructure, does it reinforce the importance of national sovereignty, or does it introduce new forms of international dependence and cooperation that challenge traditional assumptions about power and security?

The defining question of the Intelligence Age is no longer whether intelligence will reshape sovereignty and security. It is how societies choose to govern, secure and apply it.