

AI World Order: How Artificial Intelligence is Reshaping Global Authority and Legitimacy

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Abstract

Artificial intelligence (AI) is driving a profound transformation, creating a new, unstable “AI World Order,” simultaneously centralising and decentralising power. On one hand, AI enhances authoritarian surveillance, concentrates geopolitical power in Big Tech, and intensifies a U.S.-China great power competition. On the other, it empowers non-state actors with generative tools, disperses agency via autonomous systems, and fragments the global information environment. This paradox is systemically eroding the post-World War II order’s foundations: state sovereignty, traditional statecraft, and the coherence of international law. In their place, new, competing authorities are rising. This paper examines this transformation, arguing that the resulting crises of agency, responsibility, and truth demand not just AI governance, but a reinvention of political legitimacy in a world where authority itself is being redefined.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, international relations, global order, sovereignty, great power competition, information warfare, international law, Big Tech

Introduction

The study of international relations (IR) focuses on the “global organisation of political authority,” which for the last 75 years has been a system of sovereign states.¹ Today, this order is being challenged by artificial intelligence (AI), a general-purpose technology

¹ Christian Reus-Smit, *International Relations: A Very Short Introduction*, 1st edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

comparable to electricity or fire.² AI is broadly understood as a machine-based system designed to operate with varying levels of autonomy to achieve human-defined objectives by automating decision-making, pattern recognition, and prediction at a scale and speed surpassing human capabilities.³

As AI integrates into global society, it is precipitating a systemic transformation defined by a central paradox. On one hand, AI is a powerful force for centralisation. It enhances authoritarian surveillance, concentrates geopolitical power in a few “Big Tech” corporations, and accelerates a bipolar great power competition between the United States and China.⁴ On the other hand, AI is an engine of decentralisation. Generative AI tools have become “weapons of the weak,” empowering non-state actors to conduct sophisticated information warfare.⁵ Autonomous systems, particularly in military operations, distribute agency, i.e. the capacity to make decisions, across human-machine teams, thereby blurring accountability by making it difficult to assign responsibility for an outcome to any single

² Matthijs M Maas, ‘International Law does not Compute: Artificial Intelligence and the Development, Displacement or Destruction of the Global Legal Order’, *Melbourne Journal of International Law* (Vol. 20, No. 1, July 2019), p. 2.

³ Christina Meleouni and Iris P Efthymiou, ‘Artificial Intelligence and its Impact in International Relations’, *Journal of Politics and Ethics in New Technologies and AI* (Vol. 2, No. 1, 5 November 2023), pp. 1–2; UN Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence, ‘Governing AI for Humanity: Final Report’, United Nations, September 2024, <<https://www.un-ilibrary.org/content/books/9789211067873>>, accessed 17 September 2025, p. 7; Wilson Wong, ‘Trends in Political Science Research: Artificial Intelligence and Voter Disinformation’, *International Political Science Abstracts* (Vol. 75, No. 2, 28 April 2025), p. 206.

⁴ Raluca Csernatonu et al., ‘Myth, Power, and Agency: Rethinking Artificial Intelligence, Geopolitics and War’, *Minds and Machines* (Vol. 35, No. 3, 11 August 2025), p. 4; Steven Feldstein, ‘The Consequences of Generative AI for Democracy, Governance and War’, *Survival* (Vol. 65, No. 5, 29 September 2023), p. 122.

⁵ Stephane J Baele et al., ‘AI IR: Charting International Relations in the Age of Artificial Intelligence’, *International Studies Review* (Vol. 26, No. 2, June 2024), p. 16.

person.⁶ Meanwhile, the AI-amplified digital ecosystem fractures the public sphere into polarised echo chambers, eroding shared reality.⁷

Traditional IR theories such as Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism offer valuable but incomplete lenses for this new era.⁸ This paper argues that AI's core paradox is not merely adding a new tool to statecraft but is eroding the pillars of the modern international order. It will first analyse AI's challenge to sovereignty, statecraft, and the balance of power. It will then map the new, competing centres of authority before exploring the resulting crises of agency, responsibility, and truth that define the emerging AI World Order.

The Erosion of the Traditional Order

The post-World War II international system was built on sovereignty, diplomacy, and a stable balance of power.⁹ AI is disrupting these principles, creating governance gaps and undermining the established tools of statecraft.

The Challenge to Sovereignty and Statecraft

Sovereignty grants states supreme authority and a monopoly on the legitimate use of force, exercised through diplomacy, economic pressure, and military power.¹⁰ AI challenges state primacy across all three domains. In diplomacy, AI offers tools for enhancing data analysis,

⁶ Csernaton et al., 'Myth, Power, and Agency', pp. 4, 10.

⁷ Sara Giusti and Elisa Piras, *Democracy and Fake News: Information Manipulation and Post-Truth Politics*, 1st edition (London: Routledge, 2020), pp. 66, 68.

⁸ John Baylis, Steve Smith and Patricia Owens, *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, 9th edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), p. 10.

⁹ Reus-Smit, *International Relations*.

¹⁰ Karen A Mingst, Heather E McKibben and Ivan M Arreguín-Toft, *Essentials of International Relations*, 8th edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2019), p. 157; Reus-Smit, *International Relations*.

scenario planning, and public engagement through chatbots and customised messaging.¹¹

However, it simultaneously enables industrial-scale disinformation campaigns that poison the environment for good-faith negotiation, transforming the tools of public diplomacy into weapons of cognitive warfare.¹² In economic statecraft, while states can use AI to model trade scenarios and predict market trends,¹³ their ability to wield traditional tools such as sanctions is complicated by the shifting locus of economic power. A handful of tech corporations now control the critical digital infrastructure that underpins the global economy, giving them geopolitical leverage that rivals that of many states.¹⁴

Most profoundly, AI challenges the state's monopoly on force. The war in Ukraine has become a "living laboratory" for military AI, where civilian tools from companies such as Palantir are used for military targeting, and commercial drones are adapted for combat, demonstrating AI's tangible battlefield advantages.¹⁵ This blurring of civilian and military sectors, or the "weaponisation of everything," decentralises the capacity for sophisticated violence and makes traditional, state-centric arms control nearly impossible.¹⁶ This erosion of statecraft creates a crisis for international law, which was designed for a world of states and cannot compute AI's challenges to attribution and responsibility. The discreet, diffuse, and opaque nature of AI development makes it highly resistant to governance through treaties or

¹¹ Hamidreza Mostafaei et al., 'Applications of Artificial Intelligence in Global Diplomacy: A Review of Research and Practical Models', *Sustainable Futures* (Vol. 9, June 2025), p. 12.

¹² Feldstein, 'The Consequences of Generative AI', pp. 121–22; Meleouni and Efthymiou, 'Artificial Intelligence and its Impact', pp. 6–7.

¹³ Mostafaei et al., 'Applications of Artificial Intelligence', p. 12.

¹⁴ Csernatoni et al., 'Myth, Power, and Agency', p. 14.

¹⁵ Michal Onderco, 'Navigating the AI Frontier: Insights from the Ukraine Conflict for NATO's Governance Role in Military AI', *Journal of Strategic Studies* (Vol. 48, No. 3, 21 February 2025).

¹⁶ Onderco, 'Navigating the AI Frontier', pp. 613–15.

customary law, leading to a “legal destruction” where key international law structures are practically eroded.¹⁷

This challenge to sovereignty is not merely theoretical. It is manifesting in direct assaults on states’ internal political processes and security. State-sponsored cyberattacks, such as the 2017 WannaCry ransomware attack attributed to North Korea, demonstrate how AI can be used to disrupt critical infrastructure and hold national systems hostage.¹⁸ Even more insidiously, AI-driven disinformation campaigns represent a direct interference in a state’s sovereign right to conduct its domestic political affairs without external manipulation. The 2016 Brexit referendum was heavily influenced by emotionally charged, misleading narratives amplified through digital platforms.¹⁹ More recently, the 2024 presidential election in Taiwan saw Chinese state-backed groups deploy AI-generated memes and fake news anchors to influence the outcome.²⁰ In both cases, external actors leveraged AI to exploit domestic divisions and undermine the integrity of the democratic process, fundamentally challenging the notion of a state’s exclusive authority within its own territory.

The Disruption of the Balance of Power

Historically, international order has been maintained by a balance of power, with states forming alliances to prevent any single state from achieving hegemony.²¹ The rise of AI is fuelling a return to great power competition, creating a new, technologically driven bipolarity. The dominant narrative is that of an AI arms race between the United States and China, who

¹⁷ Maas, ‘International Law does not Compute’, pp. 23, 26, 29.

¹⁸ Meleouni and Efthymiou, ‘Artificial Intelligence and its Impact’, p. 5.

¹⁹ Giusti and Piras, *Democracy and Fake News*, pp. 53–54, 61.

²⁰ Wong, ‘Trends in Political Science Research’, pp. 209–10.

²¹ Mingst et al., *Essentials of International Relations*, p. 32.

both view AI leadership as essential for national security and global influence.²² This competition creates a powerful centralising dynamic, with both nations investing massively in AI and attempting to pull smaller states into their respective technological spheres through initiatives such as China's "Digital Silk Road".²³ This technological rivalry is seen as a defining feature of a "new Cold War," shaping everything from military strategy to global economic alignments.²⁴

However, unlike the nuclear arms race of the 20th century, the AI competition is not a purely bipolar affair, nor is power neatly contained. Generative AI, in particular, acts as a potent decentralising force. Because the tools to create convincing deepfakes and generate disinformation are cheap and widely accessible, this technology has become a "weapon of the weak".²⁵ It empowers smaller states, terrorist groups, and even ideologically motivated individuals to achieve strategic effects, such as social destabilisation, electoral interference, or reputational sabotage, that were previously reserved for major powers.²⁶ Beyond the U.S.-China dyad, other actors are carving out unique roles. The European Union, for example, projects power not through corporate or military AI dominance but by establishing itself as a global regulatory standard-setter with its AI Act, attempting to shape the technological environment for everyone.²⁷ The ability to manipulate the information environment has thus

²² Baele et al., 'AI IR', p. 6; Wong, 'Trends in Political Science Research', p. 213.

²³ Ingvild Bode, 'AI Technologies and International Relations: Do We Need New Analytical Frameworks?', *RUSI Journal* (Vol. 169, No. 5, 29 August 2024), pp. 68, 74; Meleouni and Efthymiou, 'Artificial Intelligence and its Impact', p. 4.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 6–7.

²⁵ Baele et al., 'AI IR', p. 16.

²⁶ Feldstein, 'The Consequences of Generative AI', p. 121.

²⁷ Giovanni De Gregorio and Oreste Pollicino, 'The European Constitutional Way to Address Disinformation in the Age of Artificial Intelligence', *German Law Journal* (Vol. 26, No. 3, 21 May 2025).

become a critical and widely distributed source of power, complicating traditional balance-of-power calculations that focused primarily on military and economic might.

The Rise of New, Contested Authorities

As the sovereign state's authority erodes, new power centres are emerging. The AI world order is not anarchic but features a complex landscape of overlapping governance where transnational corporations, regulatory blocs, and technologically enhanced authoritarian states compete to set the rules.

The “AI Empire” of Big Tech

Perhaps the most significant new actor on the world stage is “Big Tech.” As previously mentioned, a small number of corporations, primarily in the U.S., control the foundational elements of the AI ecosystem: the data, the computational power, and the most advanced models. This has led to the rise of what has been termed a new “AI Empire,” a “decentered and deterritorializing” form of power that operates through global networks. These companies are geopolitical forces, controlling critical digital infrastructure and engaging in “algorithmic governance” that shapes world events.²⁸ This corporate hegemony is built on the successful application of key principles for “realistic AI” implementation, including a foundation of high-quality data, investment in human skills, and strong executive leadership.²⁹ Their power is not just economic; it is operational and normative.

The indispensable role of these companies in modern conflict illustrates their autonomous power. During the war in Ukraine, firms such as Palantir provided critical targeting software called MetaConstellation, and collectively with companies such as

²⁸ Csernatoni et al., ‘Myth, Power, and Agency’, pp. 12–14.

²⁹ Jürgen K-U Brock and Florian von Wangenheim, ‘Demystifying AI: What Digital Transformation Leaders can Teach You About Realistic Artificial Intelligence’, *California Management Review* (Vol. 61, No. 4, 24 July 2019).

Microsoft, Google, Amazon, and Starlink, effectively became “prominent war-time actors”.³⁰ This entanglement blurs the line between corporate actors and extensions of state hegemony, raising profound questions about sovereignty. These firms also shape global governance directly; OpenAI’s CEO has testified before the U.S. Congress and lobbied the EU on regulation, while Google has proposed alternative regulatory models, demonstrating that they are not merely subjects of governance but active participants in its creation.³¹ Their design choices and terms of service become de facto global standards in a world with a significant governance deficit.³²

The European Union as a Regulatory Superpower

In response to the hegemonic power of U.S. tech firms and the state-centric model of China, the European Union (EU) is forging a “third way” by leveraging its market size to project power through regulation.³³ The Digital Services Act (DSA) and the AI Act embody a risk-based model that imposes strict obligations on high-risk systems and mandates transparency for technologies such as deepfakes. This strategy targets the dynamics of the information ecosystem rather than content itself, aiming to make online platforms accountable for systemic risks such as disinformation through a system of co-regulation.³⁴ In doing so, the EU seeks to become a global rule-maker, shaping AI development worldwide.

However, the effectiveness of this model faces significant challenges. The EU’s co-regulatory approach, which relies on collaboration between public and private actors, creates

³⁰ Csernatoni et al., ‘Myth, Power, and Agency’, p. 13; Onderco, ‘Navigating the AI Frontier’, p. 612.

³¹ Feldstein, ‘The Consequences of Generative AI’, p. 132.

³² Bode, ‘AI Technologies and International Relations’, p. 73.

³³ De Gregorio and Pollicino, ‘The European Constitutional Way’.

³⁴ Noémi Bontridder and Yves Pouillet, ‘The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Disinformation’, *Data & Policy* (Vol. 3, 25 November 2021); *Ibid.*, pp. 451, 469.

the risk of regulatory capture, where powerful tech companies can unduly influence the rules designed to govern them.³⁵ Furthermore, the rapid pace of technological evolution poses a constant threat to the efficacy of legislation. As critics have noted, regulations such as the AI Act and DSA may struggle to keep pace with the swift development of new AI capabilities, potentially leaving dangerous gaps in enforcement.³⁶ This raises a crucial question: can a legalistic, bureaucratic approach effectively govern a technology that is defined by exponential and often unpredictable change?

The Authoritarian Enhancement Model

While democracies grapple with regulating AI to protect individual rights, authoritarian regimes are harnessing it to perfect social control and project power. China, in particular, uses AI to automate mass surveillance, implement “data fusion” initiatives to integrate siloed databases, and create detailed profiles of potential dissenters, viewing AI mastery as essential to its governance model.³⁷ This “whole-state” approach enables a level of social management previously unimaginable, positioning China’s model as a potential global alternative to liberal democracy.³⁸ Russia, on the other hand, has used synthetic content and entities such as the “Internet Research Agency” in its aggressive information operations to influence foreign political outcomes.³⁹ These examples make it clear that such authoritarian states employ sophisticated AI technologies to not only scrutinise their own citizens, but also interfere in democratic processes abroad.⁴⁰

³⁵ De Gregorio and Pollicino, ‘The European Constitutional Way’, p. 469.

³⁶ Wong, ‘Trends in Political Science Research’, p. 214.

³⁷ Feldstein, ‘The Consequences of Generative AI’, pp. 122–23.

³⁸ Wong, ‘Trends in Political Science Research’, p. 213.

³⁹ Baele et al., ‘AI IR’, p. 15.

⁴⁰ Wong, ‘Trends in Political Science Research’, pp. 209–10, 214.

However, this model faces a central paradox: the most powerful AI requires massive amounts of diverse, uncensored data to train effectively, which directly threatens the information control that is foundational to authoritarian rule. When Chinese chatbots produce politically inconvenient answers, such as acknowledging the Tiananmen Square massacre or naming Russia as an aggressor in Ukraine, they are quickly shut down. By restricting data access and enforcing strict censorship to maintain political stability, such authoritarian regimes risk hindering their own ability to innovate and stay competitive in the global AI race, creating a deep and potentially unsustainable tension between control and technological progress.⁴¹

The Crisis of Agency and Responsibility

The fragmentation of political authority is mirrored by a deeper crisis of human agency and responsibility. The autonomy of intelligent systems blurs lines of accountability, creating a “responsibility gap” that challenges existing legal and ethical frameworks.⁴²

A core conceptual error is treating AI systems as moral agents capable of bearing blame. Current AI lacks “reflexive autonomy,” i.e. the ability to evaluate its own programming, and thus remains a tool of its human users.⁴³ Human “automation bias” creates a “moral buffer,” allowing operators to feel ethically distant from their actions by misplacing responsibility onto the machine.⁴⁴ This illusion of shared responsibility dangerously diminishes human accountability. This is not a new problem; the history of technology is rife

⁴¹ Feldstein, ‘The Consequences of Generative AI’, pp. 123–25.

⁴² Bérénice Boutin, ‘State Responsibility in Relation to Military Applications of Artificial Intelligence’, *Leiden Journal of International Law* (Vol. 36, No. 1, March 2023), p. 134.

⁴³ Toni Erskine, ‘AI and the Future of IR: Disentangling Flesh-and-Blood, Institutional, and Synthetic Moral Agency in World Politics’, *Review of International Studies* (Vol. 50, No. 3, 6 May 2024), pp. 535, 545.

⁴⁴ Boutin, ‘State Responsibility’, pp. 136–37; Erskine, ‘AI and the Future of IR’, p. 552.

with examples of ethical failures where responsibility was diffused. The use of IBM's Hollerith machines to enhance the efficiency of the Nazi regime's atrocities is a stark historical precedent, demonstrating how the provision of a seemingly neutral technology can enable profound harm without clear lines of culpability. Furthermore, documented racial biases in facial recognition algorithms and the unauthorised use of genetic data, such as in the case of Henrietta Lacks, highlight how "invisible risks" embedded in data and algorithms can lead to harmful outcomes that are difficult to attribute to any single malicious actor.⁴⁵

Moreover, AI's integration into military and other decision-making processes creates a state of "distributed agency," where responsibility emerges from the complex interactions within human-machine. The notion of a "human-in-the-loop" is often imaginary, as the human operator may lack the cognitive capacity to genuinely scrutinise the machine's recommendations, becoming a functional part of an automated process rather than an independent overseer.⁴⁶ This diffusion of agency creates profound challenges for state responsibility under international law, which relies on attributing wrongful acts to specific human conduct.⁴⁷ While not an absolute gap, this complexity obscures the chain of accountability, making the enforcement of legal norms practically difficult.

The Ideational Battlefield: Disinformation and Myth

The contest for power in the AI world order is waged with narratives as much as with algorithms. AI has weaponised information, creating an ideational battlefield where the primary casualties are democratic trust and shared reality.

Disinformation as an Emotional Weapon

⁴⁵ Andrew J Hampton and Jeanine A DeFalco, *The Frontlines of Artificial Intelligence Ethics: Human-Centric Perspectives on Technology's Advance*, 1st edition (Abingdon: Routledge, 2022), pp. 35–40.

⁴⁶ Csernatoni et al., 'Myth, Power, and Agency', pp. 9–10.

⁴⁷ Boutin, 'State Responsibility'.

AI has transformed disinformation from a niche tactic into a tool of mass disruption.⁴⁸

Generative AI enables malicious actors to create highly realistic deepfakes and propaganda at an unprecedented scale, using micro-targeting and automated bots to polarise societies and manipulate elections. Recent campaigns have included AI-generated robocalls impersonating President Joe Biden, fake audio clips in the 2024 Indian election, and doctored images of a Pentagon explosion that briefly caused a dip in the stock market.⁴⁹ As the 2016 Brexit referendum showed, the goal of these campaigns is not to convince but to create chaos by destroying “the sense by which we take our bearings in the real world”.⁵⁰

This strategy works by leveraging disinformation as an “emotional weapon.” The objective is to create an information environment so polluted with falsehoods, half-truths, and conspiracy theories that citizens become cynical, exhausted, and distrustful of all sources, including formerly respected institutions. This phenomenon, termed “truth decay,” blurs the line between fact and opinion, and erodes the common factual basis required for democratic deliberation. By appealing directly to emotion rather than reason, these campaigns demobilise the electorate and undermine the legitimacy of democratic processes, thereby eroding the foundations of democratic discourse.⁵¹

The Power of Myth and Techno-Eschatology

Powerful myths shape AI’s development and legitimise its use. The narrative of the “experimental way of warfare” frames conflict zones as “living laboratories” for

⁴⁸ Bode, ‘AI Technologies and International Relations’, pp. 70–71; Bontridder and Poulet, ‘The Role of Artificial Intelligence’.

⁴⁹ Feldstein, ‘The Consequences of Generative AI’, p. 121; Wong, ‘Trends in Political Science Research’, pp. 208–09.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

⁵¹ Giusti and Piras, *Democracy and Fake News*, pp. 65, 67, 69–70.

technological innovation, creating a self-perpetuating cycle where war is seen as an opportunity for progress.⁵² This ideology justifies the rapid deployment of untested technologies in high-stakes environments and reconfigures endless conflict as a necessary condition for maintaining a technological edge. Simultaneously, tech elites often employ techno-eschatological rhetoric, framing AI in apocalyptic terms of either salvation or extinction. By casting themselves as prophets with privileged knowledge, they can justify their projects as inevitable and stifle democratic debate.⁵³ These narratives mystify the technology and obscure the political choices and power dynamics at play.

Potential AI Governance Strategies

The fragmentation of global authority and the pervasive nature of AI have created a profound global governance deficit, marked by gaps in representation, coordination, and implementation.⁵⁴ While the competitive dynamics of the new great power rivalry make robust, binding international agreements on AI arms control unlikely in the near future,⁵⁵ a consensus is emerging that governance cannot be left to market forces alone. The UN Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence has proposed a holistic, networked approach to bridge this deficit, grounded in international law and focused on building global cooperation.

A key recommendation is the creation of a common understanding of AI's capabilities, risks, and opportunities. This would be facilitated by an international, multidisciplinary scientific panel on AI, analogous to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Such a body would provide impartial, reliable scientific knowledge to

⁵² Csernatoni et al., 'Myth, Power, and Agency', pp. 5, 7; Hampton and DeFalco, *The Frontlines of Artificial Intelligence Ethics*, p. 129.

⁵³ Csernatoni et al., 'Myth, Power, and Agency'.

⁵⁴ UN Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence, 'Governing AI for Humanity', pp. 8, 37.

⁵⁵ Onderco, 'Navigating the AI Frontier', pp. 604, 610–11.

policymakers worldwide, helping to balance the information asymmetry that currently exists between a few tech companies and the rest of the world.⁵⁶

Building on this shared understanding, the international community must establish common ground for interoperable governance. This involves creating an inclusive policy forum where all member states, along with stakeholders from industry and civil society, can share best practices and develop common standards.⁵⁷ This approach mirrors the co-regulatory model pursued by the European Union, which fosters dialogue between public and private actors to align on risk mitigation without resorting to top-down content regulation.⁵⁸ A global AI standards exchange could further serve as a clearinghouse to harmonise the currently fragmented landscape of technical and ethical standards.

Finally, governance must ensure that AI yields common benefits and does not exacerbate existing inequalities. This requires a concerted effort to build capacity in the Global South, which has largely been excluded from AI governance conversations.⁵⁹ Proposed mechanisms include a capacity development network to share expertise, a global fund for AI to provide access to critical resources such as data and compute, and a global data framework to ensure that the world's linguistic and cultural diversity is reflected in AI systems.

Conclusion

The rise of artificial intelligence has initiated a fundamental reordering of global political authority. The central paradox of AI, its simultaneous push toward centralisation and decentralisation, is actively fragmenting the international system. This process erodes the

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ UN Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence, 'Governing AI for Humanity', pp. 11, 52.

⁵⁸ De Gregorio and Pollicino, 'The European Constitutional Way', pp. 468–70.

⁵⁹ UN Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence, 'Governing AI for Humanity', pp. 5, 8, 14.

pillars of the post-war order: the sovereignty of the state is challenged by transnational corporations, traditional statecraft is rendered less effective in a world of algorithmic warfare, and international law struggles to address a technology that defies its core assumptions about agency and attribution. In place of a singular, state-centric order, a multi-order world is emerging where authority is contested by state-based authoritarians, the market-driven AI Empire, and norm-based regulatory blocs.

However, the pace of this transformation is not guaranteed. The actual deployment of realistic AI is a complex and resource-intensive process, suggesting the new order will be built on uneven and messy digital transformation, not just grand visions. The ultimate challenge, therefore, is not merely technological but political. It lies in navigating a world where authority itself is in flux. The crisis of agency and the weaponisation of information have undermined the foundations of both democratic legitimacy and international trust. The path forward demands a realistic appraisal of AI's invisible risks and a commitment to reinventing our democratic infrastructure to forge a new social contract for a world in which power, authority, and agency are being irrevocably transformed.