The rise of Artificial Intelligence in the context of Mass Atrocities: Policies and Recommendations from International and Regional Organisations

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Abstract. Artificial intelligence (AI) is becoming commonplace in every aspect of society at an accelerating rate, employed in civilian industries such as healthcare and education but also for military means. While there are several benefits to such a trend, the rise of AI does not come without challenges.

A paper was published by the Budapest Centre recently on the security risks related to the rise of AI in the context of mass atrocities. This second paper of the series aims to provide an overview of the policies and recommendations made by international and regional organizations in this realm. Building upon this, the paper concludes that the majority of the eight well-known organizations addressed in the paper do not tackle the challenges from a security perspective.

The Budapest Center for Mass Atrocities Prevention, therefore, pushes these organizations to look closer at concrete actions in the field of AI and mass atrocities they could take by articulating policies and recommendations that governments should take on this topic. The paper predominantly targets young people to introduce them to the topic of mass atrocities in relation to AI; however, academics are welcome to utilize this work for their purposes. The authors hope that the document will also contribute to the research planned by the Budapest Centre within the Initiative "Multipolar Task Force."[1]

[1] The Budapest Centre for Mass Atrocities Prevention, "Towards a Multipolar Task Force to Prevent Mass Atrocities in The Era of Geopolitical Change, Climate Threats to Security and Digital Revolution," The Budapest Centre for Mass Atrocities Prevention, July 22, 2020, https://www.genocideprevention.eu/climate-threats-to-security-and-digital-revolution/.

Artificial intelligence (AI) applications have infiltrated every aspect of society, causing governments to become increasingly aware of the potential ramifications of AI - both as a source of economic prosperity and as a security risk. In particular, AI has the potential to instigate and exacerbate mass atrocities. Given both the opportunities and risks of AI, a number of international and regional organizations have adopted digital strategies that account for the rise in AI technologies. However, there also remain a myriad of organizations which have yet to comment on AI, let alone account for the challenges that arise from its use. This paper sets out to understand the current AI strategies of international and regional organizations, specifically in the context of crimes of mass atrocities.

International Organisations

1. United Nations

The United Nations (UN) has addressed the implications of AI technologies extensively, emphasizing both the economic benefits of the technology, as well as the challenges that arise with its use. The UN Secretary-General has stated that AI should be used responsibly, as a force for good incorporating rights-based, ethical perspectives, and warned against the ability for AI to be employed for malicious purposes or have unintended adverse consequences, such as polarization, inequality and cyberattacks.[2] To address these challenges, the Secretary-General's strategy calls for broad and inclusive dialogue and cooperation at all levels with all actors.[3]

Accordingly, the UN has held several events and established initiatives designed to account for this. To name a few, the UN International Telecommunication Union (ITU) hosts the AI for Good Global Summit each year to discuss how AI can help meet the UN Sustainable Development Goals.[4] Moreover, the UN established the Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics to research and understand the risks and benefits of AI, as well as to improve coordination and information dissemination.[5] Additionally, the UN Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons has become a forum for discussing the emergence of lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS), which the Secretary-General has urged a global ban on.[6] Equally, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has completed extensive research on AI technologies with an emphasis on a humanistic approach towards AI; this includes addressing the ethics of AI through projects such as a global online consultation, which was recently launched to produce recommendations on the ethics of AI.[7]

Despite these advances, the report of the Secretary-General, the Roadmap for Digital Cooperation 2020, acknowledges that challenges remain.[8] It highlights three predominant challenges; the first

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[2] United Nations Secretary-General, *UN Secretary-General's Strategy on New Technologies* (Geneva: United Nations, 2018), https://www.un.org/en/newtechnologies/images/pdf/SGs-Strategy-on-New-Technologies.pdf.
[3] United Nations Secretary-General, *UN Secretary-General's Strategy on New Technologies.*
[4] United Nations AI for Good Global Summit, "About Us," United Nations AI for Good Global Summit, n.d., accessed October 13, 2020, https://aiforgood.itu.int/about-us/.
[5] United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), "UNICRI Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics," UNICRI, n.d., accessed October 13, 2020, http://www.unicri.it/in_focus/on/UNICRI_Centre_Artificial_Robotics.
[6] United Nations Geneva, "Background on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems in the CCW," United Nations Geneva, n.d., accessed October 13, 2020. https://www.unog.ch/80256EE600585943/(httpPages)/8FA3C2562A60FF81C1257CE600393DF6?OpenDocument.
[7] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), "Towards a Humanistic Approach," UNESCO, n.d., accessed OCtober 13, 2020, https://en.unesco.org/aidev; UNESCO, "UNESCO launches worldwide online public consultation on the ethics of artificial intelligence," UNESCO, July 7, 2015, accessed October 13, 2020, https://en.unesco.org/news/unesco-launches-worldwide-online-public-consultation-ethics-artificial-intelligence.
[8] United Nations, *Report of the Secretary-General: the Roadmap for Digital Cooperation* (Geneva: United Nations, 2020), https://www.un.org/en/content/digital-cooperation-roadmap/assets/pdf/Roadmap_for_Digital_Cooperation_EN.pdf.

challenge concerns the "lack of representation and inclusiveness in global discussions" with developing countries often excluded from forums. The second acknowledges that current AI-related initiatives lack overall coordination through a common platform that brings together separate initiatives, causing a lack of accessibility for external parties. The third challenge stipulates that public sectors would gain from further capacity and expertise to "engage in artificial intelligence and bring national oversight or governance to the use of such technologies" as opportunities for AI as a public good remain overlooked. Last, in regard to human rights, the report cautioned that AI must not undermine human rights nor exacerbate existing discrimination and inequality.

2. Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is animated by its mission to design better policies that can foster "prosperity, equality, opportunity and well-being for all."[9] The OECD recognizes the challenge that AI poses to our society, both the benefit we can gain from it - solving global issues such as climate change or a pandemic - but also its challenges and its threats. As an international organization having a worldwide resonance, the OECD took initiatives to promote a sustainable use of artificial intelligence and supports governments' engagement in a trustworthy way in this realm. In May 2019, the 42 OECD member countries and non-members - including Argentina, Peru and Ukraine for instance - adopted the OECD Principles on Artificial Intelligence.[10] There are five main recommendations on how to use AI carefully, which includes designing AI systems in a way respecting human rights, laws, democratic values and including the monitoring of humans when necessary to make sure these values are respected. A call for more transparency and information on how the outcomes produced by AI can impact and challenge citizens has also been made. Finally, one of the main recommendations is that AI systems must be continually assessed in order to avoid any potential risks and that the party (either institution or individual) developing or monitoring the AI system should be held responsible if the machine learning is not in line with the principles stated above. The OECD also provides recommendations for governments to take concrete actions, such as facilitating research and development in the field of ethical and responsible AI. Creating policies to make sure AI systems are regulated and trustworthy is also a key point in this section, as well as international cooperation to ensure responsible sharing of data and AI.

Regional Organisations

3. North Atlantic Treaty Organization

In a 2019 report, the NATO Science and Technology Committee evaluated the impact of AI for NATO's armed forces.[11] The *Artificial Intelligence: Implications for NATO's Armed Forces* report addressed the opportunities, challenges and uncertainties of AI for defence and security. AI as a disruptive technology has a myriad of benefits for the armed forces; for example, it can significantly boost the speed and quality of human and machine analysis and actions through training. However, the report equally acknowledges the concerns surrounding AI, including the moral, legal and ethical questions that arise with its adoption, particularly in the context of lethal autonomous weapons systems. Other challenges include the lack of data that reflects real-world situations without bias, as well as the reliability of AI as a technology that can be trusted. Accordingly, in recent years, a number of NATO entities have launched AI-related activities or included AI in their other activities, including the NATO Sciences and Technology Organisation (STO), the Allied Command Transformation

[9] OECD, *Who we are*, retrieved from: https://www.oecd.org/about/
[10] OECD Principles on Artificial Intelligence, adopted the 22nd of May, 2019. Retrieved from: https://www.oecd.org/science/forty-two-countries-adopt-new-oecd-principles-on-artificial-intelligence.htm
[11] Matej Tonin, *Artificial Intelligence: Implications for NATO's Armed Forces* (Brussels: Science and Technology Committee, 2019), https://www.nato-pa.int/view-file?filename=/sites/default/files/2019-10/REPORT%20149%20STCTTS%2019%20E%20rev.%201%20fin-%20ARTIFICIAL%20INTELLIGENCE.pdf.

(ACT), the NATO Communications and Information (NCI) Agency, the NATO Industrial Advisory Group (NIAG) and the Sciences for Peace and Security Program.

In terms of how NATO should most efficiently approach AI, the report highlights three elements. First, it notes that NATO should maintain an edge in sciences and technology, including in AI, through substantial investments in AI R&D. Second, the technological gap between the member states should remain minimal so to not undermine the organization's military effectiveness. NATO members can do so with interoperability at the centre of AI efforts through technology sharing and transfer. Last, the report calls for working in conjunction with governments and the EU to overcome AI's challenges; governments should incorporate AI into their armed forces through addressing the ethical, legal and social issues from the start, such as privacy concerns and the human involvement in the decision to use force. Equally, the members, alongside NATO, should account for and monitor the geopolitical challenges, notably ones from Russia and China who invest heavily in AI.

4. European Commission and European Council

In the last years, the rapid expansion of AI technologies has required the EU to develop counterstrategies to address the challenges and co-damages vectored by these technological changes. In 2018, the European Commission published "The coordinated plan on Artificial Intelligence"[12] to present a "human-centric approach" that places people at the center of the development of AI. This rather ethical recommendation was followed by the white paper "European approach to excellence and trust"[13] in February of this year, which responds in particular to high risk areas of the technology, for instance in healthcare, government and transportation.

First of all, the paper strongly emphasizes that there is a need to provide clear information of AI systems' capabilities and limitations. One of the big dangers is that AI could affect fundamental values of the EU and lead to fundamental breaches of EU-norms such as rights to freedom of expression, human dignity and non-discrimination based on sex, gender or religion. The specific characteristics of AI like unpredictability and partially autonomous behavior make it challenging to monitor progress regarding the discrimination and exclusion of minorities and other societal groups.[14] Thus, the paper suggests the development of requirements that would entail in particular obligations to use data sets that are sufficiently representative, especially to ensure that all relevant dimensions of gender, ethnicity and other possible grounds of prohibited discrimination are appropriately reflected in those data sets.[15]Moreover, the policy highly recommends the documentation of the training methodologies, processes and techniques in order to create transparency and to avoid AI's bias that could quickly lead to discrimination of several societal groups. Another highlighted point is the threat in security, especially in personal and cyber security. The paper suggests a strong cooperation with the EU Cybersecurity Agency (ENISA), in order to draw on expertise and experiences from the past.[16]

Building upon this report, the EU Council Conclusions 2020 (no. 8711/20) has recognised the benefits of AI both in economic and societal terms, in particular throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. However, at the same time, the Council stressed AI applications come with certain risks, including the ability to inhibit human rights and privacy and exacerbate discrimination and inequality. AI can

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[12] European Commission, *Communication from The Commission to The European Parliament, The European Council, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and The Committee of the Regions - Coordinated Plan on Artificial Intelligence* (Brussels: European Commission, 2018), https://ec.europa.eu/knowledge4policy/publication/coordinated-plan-artificial-intelligence-com2018-795-final_en.
[13] Massimo Craglia et al., *Artificial Intelligence: A European Perspective* (Brussels: Publications Office of the European Union, 2020), https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/publication/artificial-intelligence-european-perspective.
[14]Massimo Craglia et al., *Artificial Intelligence: A European Perspective.*
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.

also be misused for criminal or malicious reasons. Accordingly, the Council called for appropriate measures that promote an ethical and human-centre approach to address the opportunities and risks of AI. With this in mind, Member States should continue AI research and development efforts and the Commission should develop concrete policy proposals for AI.[17]

5. *African Union*

The African Union, a continental union of 55 member states, has issued in May 2020 its *Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa (2020-2030)* report. This crucial paper lays the foundation for a digital transformation - and the policy recommendations following - in a large number of sectors, including AI. On AI specifically, the report suggests that this emerging technology is needed and should be developed more for a digital and prosperous African industry. The report encourages industries of all sectors and of types - both public and private - to invest and embrace AI. The African Union seems to promote AI from the economic and development perspectives but do not touch upon the security implications, seeing it as a way to financially develop its continent. Only one policy recommendation out of all the ones mentioned refers to AI's potential risks: "Develop policies that address the spectrum issues around emerging technologies [such as] AI".[18] This proposal is extremely vague, and it appears that the African Union has no clear strategy - for the moment - on how to counter AI's dangers. This is of crucial matter, as Africa is a continent experiencing numerous wars, ethnic cleansing and perpetration of genocides.

6. *Arab League*

In May 2019, the Arab League launched its digital strategy known as the *Arab Digital Economy Strategy*. The 22 members set out the initiative aimed to promote a "sustainable, inclusive and secure digital future" to facilitate long-term economic growth.[19] Within this framework, AI is regarded as a key aspect to the success of the plan. It is part of one of the five pillars of the strategy, designed to promote innovation as a medium for digitization. More specifically, AI will be used to further develop internet services and communication platforms, which is regarded as an "essential element for the digital economy to exist and thrive".[20] Thus, similar to the African Union, AI is embraced as a tool for economic growth. The risks of AI, on the other hand, are overlooked; there is no mention of the security risks of AI, which could be an impediment for the League, and the region at large, which suffers from political instability, terrorism and corruption.

7. *Organization of American States*

As an organisation, the Organization of American States (OAS) has no unified AI or digital strategy. There has been mention of AI in certain initiatives; for example, the State of Cybersecurity in the Banking Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean report calls for the employment of AI among other digital technologies in the financial sector to counter cyberattacks.[21] It also highlights the potential risks of AI if used by cybercriminals. Individually, too, several member countries have made significant progress in the field of AI, most notably the US, which, last year, announced the

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[17] Council of the European Union, Council conclusions on shaping Europe's digital future (June 9, 2020), https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-8711-2020-INIT/en/pdf.

[18] African Union, *The Digital transformation Strategy for Africa (2020-2030)* (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: African Union, 2020), https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/38507-doc-dts-english.pdf.

[19] Arab Commission for Digital Economy, *Arab Digital Economy Strategy* (Cairo and Abu Dhabi: Center for Economic, Financial Research, Studies (CEFRS) and EFESO, 2019), https://www.arab-digital-economy.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Integrated-summary-report-V18-.pdf.

[20] Arab Commission for Digital Economy, *Arab Digital Economy Strategy*.

[21] Organization of American States, *State of Cybersecurity in the Banking Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean* (Washington DC: Cyber Security Program of the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism, 2018), http://www.oas.org/es/sms/cicte/sectorbancarioeng.pdf.

American AI Initiative to "promote and protect national AI technology and innovation."[22] While the OAS discusses the implications of AI, it does not pay special attention to security implications to AI, nor does it appear to extensively account for the challenges that arise as a result of digital disparities between the members. A comprehensive initiative across the states would allow each member to reap the benefits of AI while accounting for its challenges.

8. Association of Southeast Asian Nations

The ASEAN Free Trade Area is a trade bloc agreement of ten Southeast Asian countries. Regarding AI, the intrinsic nature of the organisation - as a commercial union rather than a politico-economic union- might explain its silence on this issue. No dangers of the potential misuse of AI are mentioned by the ASEAN when these lines are written. The representative of Indonesia to the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights for 2019-2021 deplored a lack of interest in this regard. She wrote an article in the Jakarta Post, "Preventing genocides should be the interest of ASEAN" in June 2020 in which she states that, not only peace-building would be enhanced if the ASEAN puts effort into genocide-prevention, but also the quality of life, human rights conditions and state sovereignty. This is especially true in the light of current events in Myanmar, accused of committing genocide against the Rohingya Muslim minority. In this case, there has been a proliferation of hate speech against the Muslim community on Facebook, which has failed to effectively suppress such narratives through its AI technologies. Indeed, social media like Facebook has been used to fuel hate speeches online, as well allowing organized groups to carry out sectarian attacks against the Rohingyas community[23]. Accordingly, AI, or the flaws of it, may be employed to further exacerbate atrocities and have disastrous consequences

Conclusion on policy recommendations

It is crucial to highlight the fact that these eight regional organizations do discuss the ramifications of AI - except for the ASEAN Trade Area. The debates are, however, essentially concentrated around the benefits that AI can bring for financial and economic development and not on the threats posed by AI on human rights and, more specifically, on mass atrocities. The OECD is the international organization, which most extensively tackles the risk of AI on human rights by providing some concrete recommendations to governments. The United Nations should tackle the threat posed by AI on human rights, and more specifically mass atrocities, substantially more. The lack of talks and concrete recommendations or actions from the biggest international organization is regrettable. The European Commission report of 2018 on AI specified that the organisation is willing to take some precise measures to ensure human rights are respected. It is the sole out of the six regional organizations reviewed tackling this issue, without, however, mentioning mass atrocities risks. The Budapest Center for Mass Atrocities Prevention, therefore, pushes these organizations to devote more attention to the rise of AI and its risks in the context of mass atrocities and take some concrete actions to prevent further unnecessary deaths due to mass atrocities.

[22] The White House, "Artificial Intelligence for the American People," *The White House*, n.d., accessed September 23, 2020, https://www.whitehouse.gov/ai/.
[23] Mozur, Paul. October 2018. A Genocide Incited on Facebook, With Posts From Myanmar's Military. *New York Times*. Retrieved from: https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/15/technology/myanmar-facebook-genocide.html

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