

JULY 2026 | ISSUE 2

COUNTERPOINT INDO-PACIFIC

A Publication of the Centre on Asia and Globalisation



Image Credit: ChatGPT

AI in the Indo-Pacific: A Path to Gains or Instability?

By Miguel Gomez

In his speech during the 2023 Singapore Conference on AI for the Global Good, then Singapore Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance Lawrence Wong **noted** that “breakthroughs in AI have sparked renewed interest – about the potential of AI, its risks, and its implications for humanity. Regardless of our individual perspectives on these issues, one thing is clear – AI now stands as a pivotal game-changing technology that impacts us all.” These sentiments reflect the dual perspectives that color the beliefs surrounding artificial intelligence – such as the **utility and threat posed by frontier models** in the **domain of cybersecurity**. On the one hand, we stand at a technological



Lee Kuan Yew
School of Public Policy



CENTRE ON ASIA
AND GLOBALISATION

Counterpoint Indo-Pacific is published regularly by the Centre on Asia and Globalisation at the National University of Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy. It seeks to answer major questions of strategic significance for Indo-Pacific by bringing in diverse voices from around the region. Each issue will tackle one question from different perspectives.

Centre on Asia and Globalisation

+65 6516 7113

cag@nus.edu.sg

469A Bukit Timah Road,

Tower Block Level 10,

Singapore 259770

<https://lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/cag>

cont'd p2

threshold wherein AI is increasingly embedded into the socio-technical fabric of modern society – a critical component of modern life. On the other, the specter of uncertainty concerning its social, political, economic, and technological risks that follows from our growing dependence on the technology is a reality faced by states across the globe as policymakers continue to grapple with the benefits and consequences that this emergent, and at times disruptive, technology brings.

Within the Indo-Pacific, the urgency to understand the implications of artificial intelligence is especially pronounced. Surveys and subsequent reports from the [University of Melbourne](#) and the [Pew Research Center](#) suggest a distinct divide between several countries in the region and their counterparts in Europe and North America. Whereas the latter appear less trusting of the technology, the former seem more optimistic about the benefits that it brings. Nevertheless, this divergence serves as one of a handful of reasons that motivate this issue of Counterpoint Indo-Pacific in which we ask **whether AI in the Indo-Pacific offers a path towards gains or instability**.

To answer this question, we frame our approach across four interrelated themes that tackle AI's impact on **(1) competition and conflict, (2) socio-economic realities, (3) technological governance, and (4) ethics and norms**. Keen-eyed observers will note

that these reflect the prevalent debates that transcend regional divides and shape policy preferences amongst those tasked with managing the use and effects of this technology. Furthermore, these choices echo our conscious attempt to treat artificial intelligence not as a material artefact that independently exerts influence at an individual, domestic, and international level. Instead, the essays contained in this issue approach AI as a socio-technical ensemble that emerges from the advancing technological know-how that is employed in and through dynamic, and often uncertain, social and political systems. To aid us in this task, this issue of Counterpoint Indo-Pacific engages with thought leaders who bring these themes into the context of the region's ongoing relationship with this technology. They presented their views in the [2nd Counterpoint Indo-Pacific \(CIP\) webinar](#).

This issue starts with **Michael Raska** discussing if and how the adoption of artificial intelligence across militaries in the region will bring increased (in)stability. The growing relevance of Military AI is often seen as a key determinant for geopolitical stability across the globe. In it he asserts that these outcomes are contingent on the interplay between regional countries' technical/economic capacities and the flexibility of defense institutions to absorb and integrate these technologies. As such, instability is not a foregone conclusion but depends greatly on if and how countries apply AI in pursuit of their strategic objectives.

Complementing this argument, **Mark Mananatan** takes a broader view to establish how countries, as a whole, are likely to pursue AI capabilities considering persistent technological limitations and interdependencies. In so doing, he proposes that regional countries are likely to follow three possible scenarios: (1) AI Fragmentation, (2) Sovereignty, or (3) Resilience. While none of these is a foregone conclusion, his essay surfaces the necessary compromises that each scenario brings and that, ultimately, it is unlikely that any one country can pursue these capabilities independently.

Moving away from the state-centric view of these debates, **Shaleen Khanal** foregrounds the prominent role of technology companies (i.e. Big Tech) in governing this technology. In so doing, his essay surfaces the unique character of AI in which governments do not hold a monopoly on governance but, instead, rely on the cooperation of the private sector for both sustained development and appropriate risk mitigation strategies.

Finally, we close this issue with an essay from **Massimiliano (Max) Cappuccio** on the ethical challenges that artificial intelligence brings. Specifically, his essay moves beyond simply calling for dialogue on ethics, demanding real and sustained collaboration across stakeholders instead. Noting national-level variance on how the technology is perceived, success hinges on going beyond mere discourse; instead, seeking means to overcome ideological

differences vis-à-vis AI is necessary if we are to overcome the ethical pitfalls that follow the use of AI.

While our contributions to this debate remain necessarily modest by virtue of both its format and the scale of the issue itself, it is nonetheless necessary. As artificial intelligence continues to develop and embed itself within modern society, academics and practitioners alike can no longer afford to adopt a “wait-and-see” attitude. Despite the obstacles that it faced over its history dating back to the pivotal workshop at Dartmouth College in the 1950s, artificial intelligence will continue to play a crucial role across the region and the world. Seeking greater understanding of this technology and how it interacts in the social, economic, and political environment is fundamental to managing its risks.

Miguel Alberto Gomez is a Senior Research Fellow at the Centre on Asia and Globalisation (CAG), Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (LKYSPP). His research explores how emerging technologies such as cyberspace and artificial intelligence reshape security, strategy, and political behaviour. His work appears in leading journals such as the International Studies Quarterly, Journal of Peace Research, and International Interactions. He earned a PhD in Political Science from the University of Hildesheim, an MA in International Security from the Barcelona Institute of International Studies, and a BSc in Computer Science from De La Salle University.