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Generative Artificial Intelligence Era: a view from the Global South

La era de la inteligencia artificial generativa: una visión desde el Sur global

ABSTRACT

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) is transforming societal structures; its hyper evolutionary nature and autonomous learning capabilities have put States in check, struggling to safeguard their interests and improve their positioning on the global power table. Given that this new technological wave has a global impact, it must also be regulated at a global level, which means that the multilateral system is the one to lead discussions in search of guidelines at the international level.

From a Global South perspective, the technical capabilities and financial resources to invest in GAI are very limited compared to more developed countries. This is why GAI innovations pose a risk

Key words: Generative Artificial Intelligence, Artificial intelligence, regulation, Global South, multilateralism, diplomacy, Peru.

of widening the existing gap between North and South. Unfortunately, although developing countries are the most vulnerable to the negative impacts of new technologies, their voices are precisely the least represented in global debates. Given this scenario, it is imperative that the Global South - and in particular, Peru - be present in the negotiations to mitigate GAI potential adverse effects.

RESUMEN

La inteligencia artificial generativa (IAG) está transformando las estructuras societales; su naturaleza hiperevolutiva y sus capacidades de aprendizaje autónomo han puesto en jaque a los Estados, que luchan por salvaguardar sus intereses y mejorar su posicionamiento en el tablero de poder mundial. Dado que esta nueva ola tecnológica tiene un impacto global, también debe ser regulada a este nivel; lo que significa que es el sistema multilateral el llamado a liderar las discusiones en busca de lineamientos internacionales.

Desde la perspectiva del Sur global, las capacidades técnicas y los recursos financieros para invertir en IAG son muy limitados en comparación con los países más desarrollados. Esta es la razón por la que las innovaciones en IAG amenazan con ampliar la brecha ya existente entre el Norte y el Sur. Desafortunadamente, pese a que son los países en desarrollo los más vulnerables a los impactos negativos de las nuevas tecnologías, son precisamente los menos representados en los debates globales. Ante dicho escenario, es imperativo que el Sur global —y en particular Perú— esté presente en las negociaciones a fin de mitigar los potenciales efectos adversos de la inteligencia artificial generativa.

Palabras clave: inteligencia artificial generativa, inteligencia artificial, regulación, Sur global, multilateralismo, diplomacia, Perú.

1. Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to machines imitating human intelligence to perform tasks, such as visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making, and problem-solving. AI systems are designed to analyze large amounts of data, learn patterns, and make predictions or decisions based on that data. While AI has many benefits, it also poses risks. These include job displacement, bias and discrimination, privacy and security concerns, lack of transparency, ethical considerations, and potential for unemployment and inequality. (GPT-3, 2023)

The previous paragraph was written entirely by an AI assistant, powered by OpenAI's Chat GPT-3. This tool uses generative AI which means that it is able to produce new content, such as images, text, music, or even an original introduction for an academic paper. And to be honest, this AI tool has probably described itself better than the authors could. This is proof that systems using AI can now perform tasks, such as writing, more clearly and persuasively than many humans. As Bremmer and Suleyman (2023) mentioned, the arrival of AI marks a "Big Bang moment" that will change the world and transform societies.

In recent years, generative AI has developed game-changing applications that are transforming the way business is done, new educational structures are designed, public policies are conceived, and even how military strategies are planned. Moreover, it should be noted that the autonomous learning nature of these applications, based on data and automatic training of learning algorithms, allows them to evolve at an astonishingly breakneck pace (García, 2020).

Since AI has a global impact, it must also be regulated at a global level, which means that the multilateral system is the right one to lead discussions in search of international regulation. States - and especially the less powerful ones - must defend their positions at these multilateral platforms, to safeguard their interests and ensure that they are not left behind in the imminent reconfiguration of the new post-AI global balance.

In that sense, international relations and diplomacy, as well as global security, are being directly affected. Faced with this scenario, the international community must act quickly to mitigate the latent risks entailed by the accelerated development of AI. The balance of global power is at stake, and it will be the countries that know how to take advantage of this new wave that will come out stronger. Therefore, it is time to act so that the Global South is not left behind, once again.

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2. Ground-breaking technological developments and global risks

AI tools are making it increasingly difficult to deal with misinformation, and consequently, with anti-democratic practices that seek to confuse the electorate. Nowadays, producing manipulative content on a massive scale has become very cheap.

For instance, as the 2024 US presidential election approaches, experts warn that technological advances have the potential to take the disinformation tactics of the past and breathe new life into them (Robins-Early, 2023). In this regard, Yvette D. Clarke, Democrat representative of New York, said that the 2024 election cycle “is poised to be the first election in which AI-generated content will prevail” (Hsu & Lee Myers, 2023).

How can States and global community combat the harmful effects of AI-driven disinformation? Unfortunately, dealing with these new threats will require different tools than the previous ones, given the uncertain nature of the future of new technologies and their unattainable pace of evolution.

An example is the UNESCO “Internet for Trust” initiative, which seeks to provide tools for regulating digital platforms (UNESCO, 2023). This multi-stakeholder initiative was launched in September 2022, after the 41st session of the General Conference of UNESCO Member States mandated that the Secretariat begin this consultation process. One year later, and despite the gigantic efforts of the UNESCO Secretariat led by the Director General, Audrey Azoulay, and the Assistant Director General for Communication and Information, Tawfik Jelassi, the document is still being prepared. Unfortunately, it is very difficult for regulators and the international community to keep up with technological developments.

The use of digital tools that promote disinformation cannot be limited under existing governance frameworks, as the disruptive nature of new technologies and their accelerated advancement requires more creative strategies. In this sense, rulers face the paradox in which they must decide whether to promote cutting-edge technologies to become stronger and more competitive or limit them to avoid their adverse effects (Bremmer & Suleyman, 2023).

Generative artificial intelligence is also perceived as a threat due to its effects in the military field. For example, the AI Palantir platform is used for military decision-making; likewise, there are already autonomous

drones, controlled by AI, that are used to attack in armed conflicts. As Fanni (2023) argues, AI allows what experts call “information superiority”, that is, obtaining a strategic advantage through data and intelligence, whether for offensive or defensive purposes within a war conflict.

Mykhailo Fedorov, Ukraine's Minister of Digital Transformation, defined the Russia's war against Ukraine as a "technology war" (Global Times, 2023). Of course, not all the IA tools in armed conflicts are thought to attack, for instance, the United Nations Development Programme - UNDP reported that its county office at Ukraine is using machine learning algorithms and big data scans in order to recognize damaged infrastructure and determine the locations of people in need (Shamoug, 2022).

Job displacement is another of the big headaches that AI brings with it, especially for workers in the Global South. According to the latest report published by the World Economic Forum, by 2027, 26 million jobs will have been reduced in administrative functions, record keeping, accounting, among others, which will be replaced by tools that use artificial intelligence. On the contrary, demand will increase for specialists in artificial intelligence and machine learning, as well as sustainability specialists, business intelligence analysts and information security analysts (WEF, 2023).

The hyper evolutionary nature of AI makes mitigating and regulating its potential adverse effects increasingly difficult. AI also differs from older technologies in the fact that almost all recent developments have “dual use”: one civil and one military (Bremmer & Suleyman, 2023). The same technology used to enhance the productivity of companies can also be applied in armed conflicts, or the facial recognition tools used to provide public services can also be used with the intention of ethnic discrimination. AI could also destroy millions of jobs as well as worsen existing inequalities between countries that invest high levels in technology and those that do not. Due to these risks, it is imperative that countries like Peru are present in the negotiations to regulate the adverse effects of new technologies.

3. Déjà-vu: Too late for the Global South?

Almost no country in the Global South has the technical capacity or financial resources to invest in AI, that is why it is limited to the technological transfer that it can obtain from the most developed countries or large international corporations. This dependency threatens to widen the already existing gap

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between the South and the North. Although countries in the Global South are the most vulnerable to the negative impacts of AI technologies, they are precisely the least represented in global discussions.

According to Tinnirello (2022), taking the number of national AI strategies adopted at the national level as a criterion, the overwhelming majority come from high-income countries. On the contrary, countries in South America, Central America, Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, and Africa propose few regulatory initiatives at the local level.

The think tank Oxford Insights has prepared the Government AI Readiness Index 2022, which analyzes 181 countries to assess how prepared the government is to implement AI in the delivery of public services to its citizens. According to this index, the Latin American and Caribbean region obtains a score of 36.15 in the Human Capital dimension, which places it as the second lowest worldwide. Many Latin American graduates of AI-related programs migrate abroad; in that sense, a more AI-ready region will require strong collaboration between governments, academia, and the private sector to prevent talent drain (Oxford Insights, 2022).

According to Oxford Insights (2022), addressing short- and long-term AI risks will require more political will and capacity building. In this sense, governments in the Latin American and the Caribbean region must ensure that digital services are more accessible to all. However, there is a clear digital gap in the region, as Internet services are inaccessible to a huge percentage of low-income groups. Furthermore, in relation to digital infrastructure, less than half of the countries in the region have 5G infrastructure, which is a necessary condition for the promotion of AI-driven technologies.

As has been seen, the region is not in the best conditions to guarantee full and inclusive development in the era of AI. Notwithstanding, it is precisely this disadvantage that should encourage Latin American governments to participate more actively in multilateral forums, in order to ensure a transparent regulation that does not contribute to widening the existing gaps between the North and the South, and that favors technology transfer, labor protection, and the application of AI tools only for peaceful purposes.

4. Regulating Artificial Intelligence: Setting standards vs. spurring innovation and competitive advantage

When it comes to grappling with AI, industry is racing ahead of governments, placing countries with more advanced private sectors years ahead of the rest. This ultimately results in lagging efforts to regulate AI and, as has been stated previously, a widening gap between developed and developing countries. This trend, paired with the fact that only a handful of countries have passed comprehensive AI legislation (Stanford University HAI, 2023), have made efforts to regulate AI on an intergovernmental, multilateral scale even more complex.

Cognizant of this trend, in 2018, Secretary General of the United Nations Antonio Guterres launched the “Strategy on New Technologies” (Hoschild, 2018) to better address AI’s potential in accelerating progress in achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, and to mitigate associated governance issues, such as unemployment, cybercrime, and other examples of unethical or malicious use. Along the same vein, in 2019, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) adopted its Recommendation on Artificial Intelligence (AI) aimed to foster innovation in AI by promoting “trustworthy AI” that respects human rights and is in line with democratic values (OECD, 2019).

A few years later, in November 2021, UNESCO’s General Conference adopted the landmark “Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence” which was hailed as the first global standard-setting instrument on AI. UNESCO’s Recommendation aims to “provide a universal framework of values, principles and actions to guide States in the formulation of their legislation, policies or other instruments regarding AI, consistent with international law” (UNESCO, 2021).

In each of the three cases, the Secretary General’s Strategy on New Technologies, the OECD’s and UNESCO’s Recommendations, the onus to make the most of AI is placed on States, as is only natural. However, not all States are on the same footing when it comes to capacity or political will to effectively shepherd industry toward a risk-adverse, human rights-based AI sector. Furthermore, there is a robust debate on whether that is even desirable, from an economic development perspective.

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More recently, however, there has been an uptick in multilateral initiatives that exemplify a cautious approach to AI. For example, the Human Rights Council resolution 53/29 on “New and Emerging Digital Technologies and Human Rights”, adopted in June of 2023:

[recognizes] that artificial intelligence systems, when adequate human rights safeguards are in place, have potential for the promotion, protection and the enjoyment of human rights [...] when used without appropriate safeguards [...] can entail serious risks to [...] the rights to privacy, to freedom of opinion and expression, to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, the rights to equal protection of the law and to a fair and public hearing, as well as economic, social and cultural rights, in particular by [...] intensifying threats from misinformation, disinformation and hate speech, which may lead to violence [...]. (Human Rights Council, 2023)

This Resolution reflects many States’ apprehension towards private sector-led applications of AI technologies being carried out “in good faith.” It is yet unclear whether these types of multilateral efforts will result in increased awareness on the urgency of developing AI legislation at the national and regional levels from a human rights perspective.

It should be noted, however, that not all multilateral platforms have the same cautious approach to AI technologies. The International Telecommunications Union (ITU), which hosts the AI for Good Global Summit every year in Geneva, in partnership with other UN Agencies, brings together speakers from governments, industry, academia, media, and the research community to discuss how AI can be utilized to end poverty, alleviate hunger, promote health, and identify development solutions.

In this sense, ITU and other industry-friendly organizations, like the OECD, foster and promote the development of “trustworthy” AI and encourage States to establish a regulatory framework that is sufficiently flexible so as not to stymie the field’s natural and rapid evolution (OECD, 2019).

The World Economic Forum (WEF) is yet another example of such an organization. The WEF established the AI Governance Alliance, a multistakeholder grouping that called for a Global Summit on Generative AI, which ultimately took place in San Francisco in April of 2023. The Global Summit’s main takeaway was a report delineating 30 concrete policy recommendations that seek to champion responsible AI systems and AI governance that fosters innovation (WEF, 2023).

When reviewing existing multilateral initiatives on AI regulation, it becomes clear that, so far, international efforts have been largely limited to guidelines intended to aid States in their efforts to develop national regulation on the matter. But which countries have legislation on AI? And how effective are their domestic regulations?

Essentially, there are only a few key players battling to dominate the global AI scene (the United States, China and the European Union), while a handful of other developed countries (Russia, Israel, Japan, for example) have noteworthy legislation that position them to also reap rewards from an economy progressively more reliant on AI technologies.

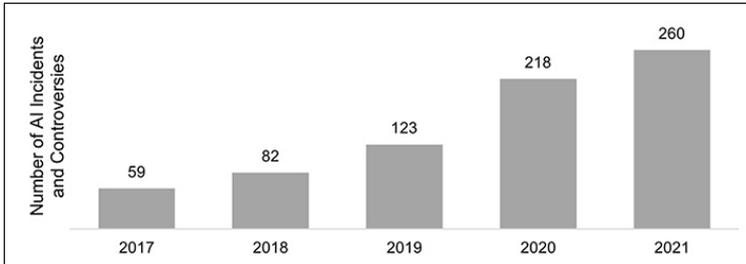
However, the regulatory frameworks these States have opted for are diverse and implementation has varied. Much in the same way that the discussion on AI regulation among multilateral circles vacillates between cautious and flexible, examples of national AI regulation among these countries can be roughly categorized into one of two frameworks: those that set high standards (EU) and those that lean toward preserving industries' competitive advantage and continue to spur innovation (United States).

According to Stanford University's 2023 AI Index, 127 countries passed 37 laws that included the words "artificial intelligence" in 2022, with the United States leading the tally, having passed nine laws total last year (Stanford University HAI, 2023). However, when it comes to comprehensive, nationwide AI legislation, only China and the EU have integral national plans on the matter. While China's AI legislation has set a goal for the private AI industry to make \$154 billion annually by 2030 (Shapiro & Cota, 2023), the EU AI Act classifies AI products by the risk they present and regulates them accordingly. Canada, Australia, Singapore, Brazil, and others are also in the process of developing national legislation on AI technologies but have a long way to go.

When it comes to assessing how effective these countries' national legislation on AI technologies have been, Stanford University's Index suggests that as AI technologies spread, the number of allegations of misuse have increased exponentially (see figure below) (Stanford University HAI, 2023).

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Figure 1*Uptick in AI Controversies*

Source: AIAAIC Repository, 2022

Chart: 2023 AI Index Report

Ultimately, AI governance, such as standards and observatories, will have to be adopted by States sooner or later, as a “laissez-faire” approach is simply not an option from a national security perspective. If left completely unchecked, AI applications may very likely generate more geopolitical tension than economic development.

That is why, when it comes to AI global regulation, the future role of the UN will undoubtedly be prominent. As research and policy proposals on this topic are becoming more widespread and commonplace, and the debate on ethical applications of AI technologies is gaining more political traction, these discussions will be ushered into the UN’s centerstage by countries without the national leverage to have their voices heard in the global AI debate.

5. Peru and Artificial Intelligence: A difficult road ahead

The authors would be remiss to not discuss the state of AI technologies in Peru. Although quite clearly not a key or aspiring player on the global AI scene, Peru has been silently making progress when it comes to AI.

In 2021, Peru’s Executive Branch launched the National Strategy on Artificial Intelligence 2021 – 2026 (Peruvian Government, 2021) and, most recently, Peru’s Congress enacted a law that promotes “Artificial Intelligence in favor of National Economic and Social Development” (Peruvian Government, 2023).

At present, use of AI in Peru's public and private sector is incipient but promising. According to a national study carried out in April 2023 by the University of Piura with financial support from a private consulting firm, 19% of private enterprises registered in Peru report using AI (Real Time Management Consulting & PAD - University of Piura, 2019). These companies are primarily from the banking, telecommunications and mining sectors, with a small percentage in academia (Peruvian Government, 2021).

Reportedly, companies from these sectors use AI in the form of chatbots, and in internal processes intended to acquire new customers, determine pricing, estimate risk, prevent fraud, and assist in inventory (Peruvian Government, 2021).

Although comparatively less commonplace within the public sector, the same study determined that AI technologies are being implemented in Peru in the following areas: facial recognition for tracking social programs' beneficiaries, virtual assistants in a variety of public services, agriculture monitoring, taxation purposes, and customs risk management (Peruvian Government, 2021).

Unfortunately, Peru is not immune to cases of misuse of AI technology. As reported by the National Authority for the Protection of Personal Data (NAPD) of the Peruvian Ministry of Justice and Human Rights (MINJUSDH), there have already been cases of artificial intelligence (AI) being used to commit fraud and/or extortion (El Peruano, 2023). The NAPD indicated that the criminals use short audio recordings of the victim's voice, taken from social media, and feed them into a fake voice creation program to produce realistic recordings that can be manipulated into any message the perpetrator desires.

Far from unique to Peru, these types of incidents demonstrate that there is a real need for AI standards to be effectively integrated into Peru's national public policies and legislations, as well as typified into national penal and civil codes.

Unfortunately, for the moment, Peru is focusing, to the extent possible considering recent political controversies, on building an environment in which AI can thrive. Indeed, the National Center for Strategic Planning recommends that Peru focus on eight aspects (listed below), of which only two are geared towards addressing unethical or dangerous applications of AI (CEPLAN, 2021):

- Developing human talent.
- Building digital infrastructure.
- Fostering an information society.

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- Opening data.
- Generating business ecosystems that contribute to the development and local use of AI.
- Strengthening the legal framework for intellectual property and data privacy.
- Addressing ethical and social implications.
- Raising awareness on “responsible use” of AI.

It is true that misuse of AI will be limited if AI continues to be uncommon, but enabling the expansion of AI without the proper safeguards might open the floodgates to governance issues that are difficult to tackle in any society, let alone Peru.

6. Conclusions

International efforts have been limited to the issuance of recommendations intended to guide Member States in their efforts to develop national regulation on IA. In this sense, even though the UN system has made titanic efforts to build general guidelines, it is still not enough, since the GAI technologies advance much faster than the reaction capacity of the international organizations and their Member States.

In that sense, greater investment and political will is needed to put GAI as a priority on the multilateral agenda, considering that a “laissez-faire” approach is simply not an option from a national and global security perspective. This is why the role of the UN will undoubtedly be prominent in the age of GAI.

In the case of Peru, it should be noted the National Artificial Intelligence Strategy 2021 – 2026 and the “Artificial Intelligence in favor of National Economic and Social Development” 2023 Law constitute milestones in the construction of a regulatory framework for these new technologies in the country. However, it is urgent to accelerate the processes of analysis and development of public policies around AI. To achieve this, it is necessary for Peru to be present at the multilateral system; that is, to be nourished by the global AI debate, to actively review peers’ experiences, and to project the country’s interests in the international arena.

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