

## Chapter 14

# Deciphering Factual Realities in the Process of Securitizing Artificial Intelligence

Muhammed Can

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6717-2611>

University of Minho, Portugal

### ABSTRACT

*The advent of artificial intelligence has shifted the outlook of great power politics over the last decade. China and the US are the main competitors in the technology front of new ‘Cold War’. Big data, 5G, quantum computing, algorithmic warfare, cybersecurity, and many other concepts are getting more topical as the day wore on. Chinese social credit system, mass surveillance systems, and exportation of these technologies to the third countries are the epicentre of the vast majority of current debates. Having said that, ‘Securitization Theory’ plays a pivotal role in determining the realities on the ground and how societies are being affected by the AI narratives particularly produced in media and academia. Therefore, this chapter seeks to reach appropriate answers on how to reify the current status of AI-based technologies via securitization theory’s significant premises.*

### INTRODUCTION

It is not surprising at all that digitalisation of societies have paved the way new paths for states to pursue to become a global digital hegemony in different theatres. Artificial intelligence (AI), quantum computing, advanced robotics, cybernetics and many others are an explicit manifestation of a critical edge where ‘knowing the unknown’ matters most. Having said that, two major powers, namely the US and China, have constantly competed over winning AI narrative—including winning hearts and minds — at a global level. It is likely to witness a new type of conflict between rival states in different landscapes. Evidently, it is not a new argument to likelihood of witnessing great power competition soon. A great deal of scholarly contribution has been made through the concept of ‘power transition’ (Organski, 1958; Organski and Kugler, 1980; Houweling and Siccama, 1988; Kim, 1989; Lemke, 2002; Levy 1987).

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-3499-1.ch014

Regardless of historical and different perspectives, one can argue that global international order is in disarray. Ongoing conflicts in different theatres including civil wars in Yemen, Libya and Syria have shown post-Cold War order is not stable both politically and economically. China's rising status has strengthened this view due to shifting foreign policy priorities in the US agenda. For a long time, American leaders "continued to herald an 'era of engagement' with Moscow and talked up Beijing's potential as a 'responsible stakeholder' in the international system (Colby and Mitchell, 2020, para.7).

This shift is more obvious in the US official documents given the 2017 and 2018 National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy, which consider relations between China and Russia more competitive than before (Ibid). Others, however, put China into different perspectives, arguing that China cannot be considered as the revisionist power. Facts and figures are also supporting this argument. For instance, China has not involved in a war since 1979, it has not intervened — by using military force — other countries' sovereignty since 1988 and it has not used proxy powers since the 1980s (Zakaria, 2020). Rather, Beijing's global status is far from better than as it has been shaped by the narratives predominantly used by the Western countries. For instance, China is the second largest funder of the UN peacekeeping program along with deploying 2,500 peacekeepers in different theatres, between 2010 and 2018 China supported 182 of 190 the UN Security Council resolutions that might reveal the level of China's cooperative initiatives (Ibid). However, it is not to say that China is a neutral state or full-fledged peaceful power, rather it is likely to witness Chinese aggressive policies particularly related to the point where it overlaps with tech, foreign and defense policies. Given the concepts such as 'unrestricted warfare' and 'three warfares' — which are Chinese strategic hybrid warfare approaches — predicting a troublesome future of emerging technologies particularly between the US and China is not a new phenomenon.

What makes significant this great power competition is that there is no consensus over how to regulate various challenges posed by AI. From ethics — i.e. value alignment and confirmation bias — to the global regulative initiatives, there have been continuous ambiguities regarding the possible outcomes of AI. Recent examples from both parties have revealed that AI has not only promising consequences but also it might lead to an unexpected event both at social and state levels. For instance, recent study suggested that 'COMPAS' project — which basically tries to inform government agencies in the U.S to determine potential criminals through AI-based system — has been performing biased against the Afro-Americans vis-à-vis White Americans (Spielkamp, 2017).

In the same vein, China has leveraged the AI-based tools particularly in Xinjiang province to control Turkic minorities via different measures (Human Rights Watch, 2019). At the end of the day, AI has potential to be exploited by both democratic and authoritarian regimes in various ways. At this point, securitization of AI plays a pivotal role for both parties. However, main problematic is that how potentially China and the US will securitize AI in myriad landscapes including healthcare, military, education and social issues. Even though it is too early to recognise AI as securitised phenomenon both parties have been trying to reify their AI narratives in line with their grand strategies—strategic priorities, foreign and defence policies — to be acknowledged as a digital superpower. In this context, this paper seeks to answer how securitization theory would be a part of AI narratives of China and the US. More importantly, it will try to draw attention on how both parties' initiatives regarding AI have created factual realities in securitization phase of AI-based tools.

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