



Research Report

United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development

AGENDA ITEM

The threat of artificial intelligence to human beings

Chairing Panel

Sadigh Latif Jalali

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Esteemed Delegates,

I am Sadigh Latif Jalali, the chair of Sixth Committee of Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC); United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) at RBC Model United Nations conference 2018. It gives me great pleasure and honor to welcome you to the fourth edition of RBC MUN in Freiburg, Germany.

The threat of artificial intelligence to the future existence of human beings is real and undeniable. Some experts in the field of technology believe that by expanding artificial intelligence (AI), we are destroying humanity. They also claim that the eventual rise of AI could lead to humans either becoming extinct, or losing their place as the dominant species on the planet.

Considering the need and importance of the discussion on the threats of artificial intelligence (AI), I decided to include this topic as the main agenda of our committee. By debating on this agenda, we will highlight the current, real and increasing threats of AI to the different aspects of civilization. The countries represented in this committee are the nations who play the key role in developing the artificial intelligence in the world. I have carefully selected the countries in CSTD to ensure the diversity of ideas and views represented by different parts of the globe.

Finally, by reading this study guide, you will get background information and a brief insight about the threats which artificial intelligence poses to humans' community. You also review the different opinions of experts in the field of technology and AI. But please remember that in order to get thorough and comprehensive knowledge about the agenda, you are highly recommended to visit the links provided in the appendices. Now, I wish you all the best with preparations and looking forward to having a hot debate in February. For any inquiries, questions or concerns, please feel free to reach me at:

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Best wishes,

Sadigh

Introduction

What you must know about artificial intelligence (AI) and the threats it poses to human beings and civilization.

Since the seminal paper of Alan Turing in 1950 about the possibility of programming an electronic computer to behave intelligently, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been experiencing for the past few decades a rapid growth in research and development. Such areas as expert systems, natural language processing, speech recognition, computer vision, robotics, etc. have significantly progressed, even though important problems still remain to be solved. The present success of AI results, among other approaches, from the design of new system architectures that are able to use all the knowledge, including human expertise, available in a given domain. Such knowledge-based systems thus take human expertise into account in order to improve their own performances. This paper aims at presenting an overview of the techniques and of the present possibilities and limitations, and future directions of AI. After a brief presentation of the basic concepts of AI, we will address the main issues involved in the development of AI systems. We will finally present the major trends for the future of AI.

The seemingly sudden rise of concerns regarding the expansion of artificial intelligence threat to human beings and civilization process has shocked and puzzled most of the experts in the field of technology. Although the recent advancements in modern sciences are considered as the main reason of artificial intelligence (AI) expansion, the root causes date back to decades ago. Indeed, over the centuries, development and improvement in technology by those who with future schemes about AI has resulted in significant expansion of artificial intelligence. The advancement in AI field is such severe that it has been considered as a threat to the human beings themselves.

Therefore, any attempt to understand today's artificial intelligence threat must begin with examining the schisms – essentially the development in technology and modern sciences – that are advancing the ongoing expansion of AI.

History

Can Machines Think?

In the first half of the 20th century, science fiction familiarized the world with the concept of artificially intelligent robots. It began with the “heartless” Tin man from the *Wizard of Oz* and continued with the humanoid robot that impersonated Maria in *Metropolis*. By the 1950s, we had a generation of scientists, mathematicians, and philosophers with the concept of artificial intelligence (or AI) culturally assimilated in their minds. One such person was Alan Turing, a young British polymath who explored the mathematical possibility of artificial intelligence. Turing suggested that humans use available information as well as

reason in order to solve problems and make decisions, so why can't machines do the same thing? This was the logical framework of his 1950 paper, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence" in which he discussed how to build intelligent machines and how to test their intelligence.

Making the Pursuit Possible

Unfortunately, talk is cheap. What stopped Turing from getting to work right then and there? First, computers needed to fundamentally change. Before 1949 computers lacked a key prerequisite for intelligence: they couldn't store commands, only execute them. In other words, computers could be told what to do but couldn't remember what they did. Second, computing was extremely expensive. In the early 1950s, the cost of leasing a computer ran up to \$200,000 a month. Only prestigious universities and big technology companies could afford to dillydally in these uncharted waters. A proof of concept as well as advocacy from high profile people were needed to persuade funding sources that machine intelligence was worth pursuing.

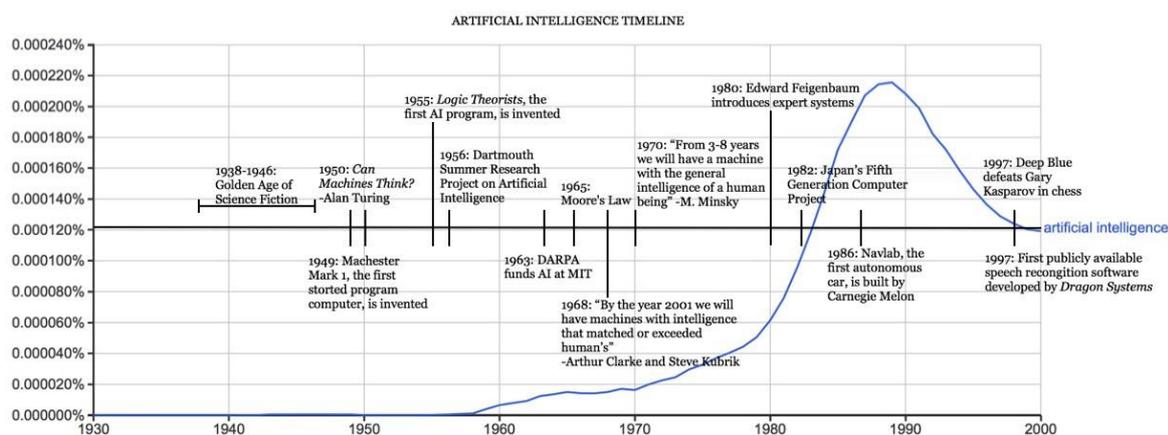
The Conference that Started it All

Five years later, the proof of concept was initialized through Allen Newell, Cliff Shaw, and Herbert Simon's, Logic Theorist. The Logic Theorist was a program designed to mimic the problem solving skills of a human and was funded by Research and Development (RAND) Corporation. It's considered by many to be the first artificial intelligence program and was presented at the Dartmouth Summer Research Project on Artificial Intelligence (DSRP AI) hosted by John McCarthy and Marvin Minsky in 1956. In this historic conference, McCarthy, imagining a great collaborative effort, brought together top researchers from various fields for an open ended discussion on artificial intelligence, the term which he coined at the very event. Sadly, the conference fell short of McCarthy's expectations; people came and went as they pleased, and there was failure to agree on standard methods for the field. Despite this, everyone whole-heartedly aligned with the sentiment that AI was achievable. The significance of this event cannot be undermined as it catalyzed the next twenty years of AI research.

Roller Coaster of Success and Setback

From 1957 to 1974, AI flourished. Computers could store more information and became faster, cheaper, and more accessible. Machine learning algorithms also improved and people got better at knowing which algorithm to apply to their problem. Early demonstrations such as Newell and Simon's *General Problem Solver* and Joseph Weizenbaum's *ELIZA* showed promise toward the goals of problem solving and the interpretation of spoken language respectively. These successes, as well as the advocacy of

leading researchers (namely the attendees of the DSRPAI) convinced government agencies such as the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) to fund AI research at several institutions. The government was particularly interested in a machine that could transcribe and translate spoken language as well as high throughput data processing. Optimism was high and expectations were even higher. In 1970 Marvin Minsky told Life Magazine, “from three to eight years we will have a machine with the general intelligence of an average human being.” However, while the basic proof of principle was there, there was still a long way to go before the end goals of natural language processing, abstract thinking, and self-recognition could be achieved.



Ironically, in the absence of government funding and public hype, AI thrived. During the 1990s and 2000s, many of the landmark goals of artificial intelligence had been achieved. In 1997, reigning world chess champion and grand master Gary Kasparov was defeated by IBM's *Deep Blue*, a chess playing computer program. This highly publicized match was the first time a reigning world chess champion lost to a computer and served as a huge step towards an artificially intelligent decision-making program. In the same year, speech recognition software, developed by Dragon Systems, was implemented on *Windows*. This was another great step forward but in the direction of the spoken language interpretation endeavor. It seemed that there wasn't a problem machines couldn't handle. Even human emotion was fair game as evidenced by *Kismet*, a robot developed by Cynthia Breazeal that could recognize and display emotions.

Artificial Intelligence is Everywhere

We now live in the age of “big data,” an age in which we have the capacity to collect huge sums of information too cumbersome for a person to process. The application of artificial intelligence in this regard has already been quite fruitful in several industries such as technology, banking, marketing, and entertainment. We've seen that even if algorithms don't improve much, big data and massive computing simply allow artificial intelligence to learn through brute force. There may be evidence that Moore's law is slowing down a tad, but the increase in data certainly hasn't lost any momentum. Breakthroughs in computer

science, mathematics, or neuroscience all serve as potential outs through the ceiling of Moore's Law.

The Future

So what is in store for the future? In the immediate future, AI language is looking like the next big thing. In fact, it's already underway. I can't remember the last time I called a company and directly spoke with a human. These days, machines are even calling me! One could imagine interacting with an expert system in a fluid conversation, or having a conversation in two different languages being translated in real time. We can also expect to see driverless cars on the road in the next twenty years (and that is conservative). In the long term, the goal is general intelligence, that is a machine that surpasses human cognitive abilities in all tasks. This is along the lines of the sentient robot we are used to seeing in movies. To me, it seems inconceivable that this would be accomplished in the next 50 years. Even if the capability is there, the ethically would serve as a strong barrier against fruition. When that time comes (but better even before the time comes), we will need to have a serious conversation about machine policy and ethics (ironically both fundamentally human subjects), but for now, we'll allow AI to steadily improve and run amok in society.

Rockwell Anyoha is a graduate student in the department of molecular biology with a background in physics and genetics. His current project employs the use of machine learning to model animal behavior. In his free time, Rockwell enjoys playing soccer and debating mundane topics.

Major countries developing AI

When it comes to making machines to perform tasks that humans have done for years, the United States, China and India are far ahead of anyone else, according to a top tech industry executive.

The three countries are leading an artificial intelligence (AI) revolution. "What to Do When Machines Do Everything?" on the impact artificial intelligence will have on the global economy. In the coming years, three horses in the race and that's probably the wrong metaphor because they are all going to win. "They are just going to win differently."

While AI is progressing quickly elsewhere too, the other development hotspots are mainly city hubs such as London and Stockholm, or far smaller economies such as Estonia.

America

Silicon Valley giants such as Facebook (FB), Amazon (AMZN), Google (GOOGL) and Tesla (TSLA) are already investing billions in harnessing the power of computers to replace several human tasks.

UNCTSD

Computers are already beginning to substitute for people in sectors such as agriculture and even medicine, not to mention the race to get driverless cars on the road. With Silicon Valley, and the vendors and momentum that exists there... that's going to continue.

China

The world's second largest economy is also betting big on artificial intelligence. Tech companies including Tencent (TCEHY) and Baidu (BIDU) are competing with Silicon Valley to develop new uses for AI, and tech billionaire Jack Ma of Alibaba (BABA), one of China's richest men, has even said CEOs may eventually be obsolete. Unlike in the U.S., however, the biggest push towards this new world in China is coming from the government.

You look at the playbook China has had very successfully, with state sponsorship around developing the [physical] infrastructure of the country. They're taking a very similar approach around artificial intelligence, and I think that's going to yield a lot of benefit.

The Chinese government has already laid out an ambitious plan for a \$150 billion AI industry, saying last month that it wants China to become the world's "innovation center for AI" by 2030.

India

In India, the main shift towards artificial intelligence is coming from companies that make up its \$143 billion outsourcing industry -- a sector that employs nearly 4 million people.

Top firms like Infosys (INFY), Tata Consultancy Services and Wipro (WIT), which provide technology services to big names including Deutsche Bank (DB), Lockheed Martin (LMT), IBM (IBM), Microsoft (MSFT) and the U.S. Army, are increasingly relying on automation in their operations.

In India, you look at this remarkable platform that is in place now... of incredibly sophisticated skills that are focused on the needs of [global] companies. In addition, India's startup scene also makes him "very optimistic" about the future of artificial intelligence there.

Cognizant (CTSH), which is based in the U.S. but has most of its workforce in India, is also making ever greater use of AI -- from online bots managing clients' finances to helping create automated systems for smart devices.

The real threat of Artificial Intelligence to human beings

What worries you about the coming world of artificial intelligence?

Too often the answer to this question resembles the plot of a sci-fi thriller. People worry that developments in A.I. will bring about the "singularity" — that point in history when A.I.

surpasses human intelligence, leading to an unimaginable revolution in human affairs. Or they wonder whether instead of our controlling artificial intelligence, it will control us, turning us, in effect, into cyborgs. These are interesting issues to contemplate, but they are not pressing. They concern situations that may not arise for hundreds of years, if ever. At the moment, there is no known path from our best A.I. tools (like the Google computer program that recently beat the world's best player of the game of Go) to "general" A.I. — self-aware computer programs that can engage in common-sense reasoning, attain knowledge in multiple domains, feel, express and understand emotions and so on.

This doesn't mean we have nothing to worry about. On the contrary, the A.I. products that now exist are improving faster than most people realize and promise to radically transform our world, not always for the better. They are only tools, not a competing form of intelligence. But they will reshape what work means and how wealth is created, leading to unprecedented economic inequalities and even altering the global balance of power. It is imperative that we turn our attention to these imminent challenges.

Robots will soon be a 'new form of life' that can outperform us

Scientists warn that AI will soon reach a level where it will be a 'new form of life that will outperform humans.' Even AI will replace all the humans together, although there is not predicted any timeline for this process. If people design computer viruses, someone will design AI that improves and replicates itself. This will be a new form of life that outperforms humans. More people are urged to take an interest in science, claiming that there would be 'serious consequences' if this didn't happen. A new space programme should be developed, 'with a view to eventually colonizing suitable planets for human habitation. Many experts believe that we have reached the point of no return. Our Earth is becoming too small for us, global population is increasing at an alarming rate and we are in danger of self-destructing. In addition, artificial intelligence could develop a will of its own that is in conflict with that of humanity. It could herald dangers like powerful autonomous weapons and ways for the few to oppress the many, he said, as he called for more research in the area. In fact, there is no deep difference between what can be achieved by a biological brain and what can be achieved by a computer. Therefore, follows that computers can, in theory, emulate human intelligence - and exceed it. Artificial intelligence is progressing rapidly and there are 'enormous' levels of investment. The potential benefits were great and the technological revolution could help undo some of the damage done to the natural world by industrialization. 'In short, success in creating AI could be the biggest event in the history of our civilization. But it could also be the last unless we learn how to avoid the risks.

Will Robots Replace Human Drivers, Doctors and Other Workers?

Robots have displaced millions of manufacturing workers, and automation is getting cheaper and more common, raising concerns it will eventually supplant far more workers in the services sector of the economy, which includes everything from truck driving to banking. we are just starting to see automation's impact. It is going to be broad and it is going to be

deep, adding that tens of millions of jobs could be at risk. While some politicians blame trade for the job losses, most economists say automation is mainly to blame as robots do routine factory tasks previously done by humans.

Self-driving cars and trucks are considered as a threat to millions of human jobs, and says fast-food workers are also vulnerable, as companies install electronic kiosks to take restaurant orders. Researches show nearly half of world' jobs could be automated, including retail store clerks, doctors who scan X-rays for disease, administrative workers, legal staffers, and middle managers.

Future of jobs

Starting more than a century ago, advancing technology changed the globe from an agrarian to a manufacturing economy. Displaced farm hands eventually found factory work, but the transition took years. This new transition may also take a time because we're not going to anywhere produce the number of jobs that we automate. But 50 years of experience in banking shows that while automation may change the industry, it does not necessarily end jobs for humans.

The first Automatic Teller Machines, or ATMs, were installed 50 years ago, and there are now tens of millions around the world. International Monetary Fund analysis shows the number of human tellers did not drop, but rose slightly. Humans were doing mostly service and routine types of tasks that could be converted into more automated tasks. But the humans then became far more valuable in customer service and in sales in these branches. While automation can be scary, the oversight of ATMs created new kinds of work for tens of thousands of people.

Automation grows

Surging investment and falling prices will help robotics grow. As growing fleets of robots take over mundane tasks, higher productivity could bring higher wages for some human workers. People who want to stay employed must hone skills that robots can't handle, such as unpredictable work or the need for an emotional human connection. One example is a program that helps law firms examine visa applications. The robot enters data but gets help from a human partner with problems such as missing information. Some human jobs have been lost, but in other cases displaced workers move within the firm to new work, particularly jobs that are "customer-centric."

Germany and other nations use training programs to help their citizens get and keep jobs in a changing economy. The Democrat says America's competitors invest six times what the U.S. does in skills development and workforce training, while Washington has slashed funding for such programs. Some experts are seeking more help for schools, companies, workers and government agencies operating programs to upgrade the workforce.

New opportunities

While workers need to make some changes, philosophers and professors also need to rethink their basic purposes. Businesses must do more than just maximize value for shareholders. We need red blood cells to live. It doesn't follow that the purpose of our life is to make red blood cells. Companies need profits to live, it doesn't follow that the purpose of a company is to make profits. We have to think through this idea about what purpose is in business."

Scientists are "optimistic" because many jobs, such as creating applications for smartphones that would have been unimaginable a few years ago, are creating thousands of opportunities. They are also encouraged by their many students who bring new ideas, passion and energy to the task of starting businesses that will create new kinds of jobs.

Experts are convinced that the problem isn't the tsunami of lost jobs, it is the lack of "really good ideas" for creating a safety net for people who will lose jobs to automation. Many scientists worry about growing levels of automation — particularly advanced forms known as artificial intelligence — hurting employment for human workers. But it will be "50 or 100 years" before artificial intelligence takes human jobs.

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

On 11 October 2017, the United Nations ECOSOC Chamber organized an international conference on the theme "The Future of Everything – Sustainable Development in the Age of Rapid Technological Change." Driverless cars. Advanced medical diagnosis. 3D printing. Artificial intelligence is playing an increasing role in the economy today, and it can fundamentally reshape global and local economies in the years to come. The impacts on communities and societies could be profound.

To place the issue of artificial intelligence on the international agenda, experts from Governments, academia, business and civil society, gathered at UN Headquarters in New York on 11 October 2017, to identify options to harness the potential of rapid technological change and innovation towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

The joint meeting of the United Nations General Assembly Second Committee and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) had a special focus on "The Future of Everything— Sustainable Development in the Age of Rapid Technological Change."

The life-like robot "Sophia," which has made many public appearances, also had participated in the event.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres has called artificial intelligence "a new frontier" with "advances moving at warp speed."

How We Can Overcome the Risks of AI

Apple's recent acquisition of Vocal IQ, an artificial intelligence company that specializes in voice programs, should not on its face lead to much fanfare: It appears to be a smart business move to enhance Siri's capabilities. But it is also another sign of the increased role of AI in our daily lives. While the warnings and promises of AI aren't new, advances in technology make them more pressing.

Forbes reported this month: "The vision of talking to your computer like in Star Trek and it fully understanding and executing those commands are about to become reality in the next 5 years." In five years, massive gains for human efficiency as a result of artificial intelligence, especially in the fields of health care, finance, logistics and retail.

Further envisions the rise of "evolutionary intelligence agents," that is, computers which evolve by themselves – trained to survive and thrive by writing their own code—spawning trillions of computer programs to solve incredibly complex problems.

While Silicon Valley enthusiasts hail the potential gains from artificial intelligence for human efficiency and the social good, Hollywood has hyped its threats. AI-based enemies have been box office draws at least since HAL cut Frank Poole's oxygen hose in 2001: A Space Odyssey. And 2015 has truly been the year of fictional AI provocateurs and villains with blockbuster movies including Terminator Genisys, Ex-Machina, and The Avengers: Age of Ultron.

But are the risks of AI the domain of libertarians and moviemakers, or are there red flags to be seen in the specter of "intelligence agents?" Silicon Valley cannot have "exponential" technological growth and expect only positive outcomes. Similarly, Luddites can't wish away the age of AI, even if it might not be the version we see in the movies.

The pace of AI's development requires an overdue conversation between technology and policy leaders about the ethics, legalities and real life disruptions of handing over our most routine tasks to what we used to just call "machines." But this conversation needs to focus increasingly on near-term risks, not just cinematic ones.

For example, even if a supercomputer's coding is flawless, and someday self-generated, and is protected from being infected by a warring nation-state, a hacktivist, or even an angry teenager, AI can still produce wrong answers. A Wired article from January 2015 showed just how wrong. When presented with an image of alternating yellow and black parallel, horizontal lines, state of the art AI saw a school bus and was 99% sure it was right.

How far can we trust AI with such control over the Internet of Things, including our health, financial, and national defense decisions? There is a service to be done in developing a deeper understanding of the reasonable precautions needed to mitigate against coding flaws, attackers, infections and mistakes while enumerating the risks and their likelihoods.

Applied to military systems the risks are obvious, but commercial products designed by AI, could produce a wide range of unexpected negative outcomes. One example might be designing fertilizers that help reduce atmospheric carbon. The Environmental Protection

Agency tests such products before they are approved so dangerous ones can be discovered before they are released. But if AI only designs products that will pass the tests, is that AI designing inherently safe products or simply ones capable of bypassing the safeguards?

One way to start addressing this question is to build AI and observe its behavior in simplified settings where humans are still smarter. RAND, where we work, produced a simulation of the fertilizer scenario that projected global temperatures and populations 75 years into the future. When the AI was given only three chemicals to learn from, the EPA was able to partially limit the dangers. But once the AI was provided delayed-release agents common in fertilizer manufacturing, it completely bypassed the protections and started reducing the number of carbon producers in the environment.

The same types of issues could exist for all manner of potentially dangerous products, like those regulated by the Food and Drug Administration, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and countless other regulatory agencies. And that doesn't even consider the threats that could be posed by AI-designed products made abroad.

Can the risks posed by AI be completely eliminated? The short answer is no, but they are manageable, and need not be cause for alarm. The best shot at providing adequate safeguards would be regulating the AI itself: requiring the development of testing protocols for the design of AI algorithms, improved cybersecurity protections, and input validation standards—at the very least. Those protections would need to be specifically tailored to each industry or individual application, requiring countless AI experts who understand the technologies, the regulatory environment, and the specific industry or application. At the same time, regulatory proposals should be crafted to avoid stifling development and innovation.

AI needs to enter the public and political discourse with real-world discussion between tech gurus and policymakers about the applications, implications and ethics of artificial intelligence. Specialized AI for product design may be possible today, but answering broad questions such as, "Will this action be harmful?" is well outside the capabilities of AI systems, and probably their designers as well.

Answering such questions might seem like an impossible challenge, but there are signs of hope. First, the risks with AI, as with most technologies, can be managed. But the discussions have to start. And second, unlike in an AI-themed Hollywood thriller, these machines are built to work with humankind, not against it. It will take an army of human AI experts to keep it that way, but precautions can and should be sought now.

Appendix

The Real Threat of Artificial Intelligence

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