



THE GEOECONOMICS OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: TECHNOLOGY DEPENDENCE, STRATEGIC COMPETITION AND INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

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RESEARCH ARTICLE



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Abstract

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has evolved from being primarily a technological innovation into an important component of economic power, strategic competition and international business. The rapid diffusion of generative AI, advanced computing, semiconductor technologies, cloud infrastructure and data-driven business models is transforming the foundations of global economic competitiveness. At the same time, access to advanced chips, computing capacity, critical minerals, data, technical talent and digital infrastructure remains highly concentrated across countries and firms. This concentration creates new forms of technological dependence and gives AI an increasingly important geoeconomic dimension. The present paper examines the relationship between AI, technology dependence, strategic competition and international business. It analyses how states are using industrial policy, investment controls, export restrictions, technology partnerships and digital regulation to strengthen their strategic positions. The paper also examines implications for multinational enterprises, global value chains, foreign direct investment, international trade and business strategy. Particular attention is given to the semiconductor ecosystem, data governance, AI infrastructure and the changing nature of technological sovereignty. The paper argues that AI is simultaneously creating opportunities for international economic integration and pressures towards strategic autonomy and economic fragmentation. For businesses, competitive advantage will increasingly depend not only on technological capability but also on resilience to geopolitical and regulatory risks. The paper concludes with implications for emerging economies, particularly India, and suggests that international cooperation, diversified supply chains, indigenous capabilities and responsible AI governance are essential for achieving sustainable and inclusive AI-led growth.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence, Geoeconomics, International Business, Technology Dependence, Strategic Competition, Geopolitics, Semiconductors, Global Value Chains, Digital Trade, Technological Sovereignty*

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Introduction

Artificial Intelligence has emerged as one of the most consequential technologies shaping the contemporary global economy. Its applications extend from manufacturing, finance and healthcare to logistics, marketing, defence, research, education and international trade. Unlike many earlier technological innovations, modern AI depends upon a complex ecosystem comprising advanced semiconductors, cloud computing, data centres, energy, specialised software, algorithms, digital infrastructure and highly skilled human capital. Consequently, the economic significance of AI cannot be understood merely through the performance of individual AI models or applications. It must also be examined through the international distribution of the resources and capabilities required to develop and deploy them.

The growing importance of AI has therefore created a new dimension of geoeconomics—the interaction between economic power and geopolitical objectives. Governments increasingly view critical technologies not only as instruments of economic growth but also as strategic assets. Control over advanced computing, semiconductor manufacturing, critical minerals, data and technological standards can influence the competitiveness and strategic autonomy of nations. The International Monetary Fund has described the contemporary AI competition as extending beyond algorithms to electricity, land, water, semiconductors and minerals, illustrating the broader resource foundations of the AI economy.

The relationship between AI and international trade is equally significant. The World Trade Organization observes that AI can reduce trade costs, improve productivity and expand access to international markets, while simultaneously creating concerns

regarding unequal access, data governance, intellectual property and regulatory fragmentation. Thus, AI can simultaneously promote global economic integration and reinforce technological divisions.

This paper examines AI through a geoeconomic and international-business perspective. It focuses particularly on three interconnected questions: How does technological dependence shape national economic power? How is strategic competition influencing the international AI ecosystem? And how should multinational enterprises and emerging economies respond to these developments?

Conceptualising the Geoeconomics of Artificial Intelligence

The term *geoeconomics* broadly refers to the use and interaction of economic instruments, resources and capabilities in pursuit of strategic objectives. In the context of AI, geoeconomics concerns the ability of countries and economic actors to acquire, control, develop and deploy critical AI-related technologies and resources. AI has several characteristics that make it particularly relevant to geoeconomics.

First, AI is infrastructure-intensive. Advanced AI systems require large-scale computing infrastructure, specialised processors and extensive data-centre capacity. Second, AI is knowledge-intensive, making skilled researchers, engineers and technical institutions important strategic resources. Third, AI is network-dependent because its development depends upon international supply chains involving chips, equipment, cloud platforms, software and data. Fourth, AI is increasingly dual-use, meaning that technologies developed for commercial applications may also have strategic or security relevance.

The geoeconomic importance of AI therefore extends beyond ownership of AI companies. A country may have innovative firms but remain dependent upon foreign suppliers for semiconductors, computing infrastructure or specialised equipment. Conversely, an economy may possess critical technological inputs without dominating the complete AI ecosystem. This creates a multidimensional concept of AI technological power, involving at least six elements:

1. Computational capability
2. Semiconductor and hardware capacity
3. Data availability and governance
4. AI research and human capital
5. Capital and entrepreneurial ecosystems
6. Regulatory and institutional capacity

The distribution of these capabilities is uneven. The IMF's research indicates that countries differ substantially in their exposure to AI, preparedness to adopt it and access to essential data and technologies, with the potential for AI to widen differences in economic outcomes if capabilities remain concentrated.

AI as a Source of Economic and Strategic Power

Historically, economic power was strongly associated with industrial production, natural resources, financial capital and control over trade routes. In the digital economy, technological capabilities have become an additional source of strategic power. AI can improve productivity by automating routine activities, supporting decision-making, predicting consumer behaviour and optimising complex processes. For international businesses, these capabilities can reduce transaction costs and enable firms to coordinate geographically dispersed operations more efficiently. The OECD identifies several channels through which AI can influence international trade, including productivity improvements, reductions in trade costs and the creation of new value from data. At the same time, trade itself enables countries and firms to access the goods, services, people and data necessary for developing AI systems. This creates a circular relationship:

International trade → access to AI inputs → AI adoption → productivity and competitiveness → increased international trade.

However, the same relationship can create dependence. If a country or company relies heavily on external suppliers for advanced processors, cloud infrastructure or specialised AI software, disruption in those supply chains can directly affect its technological and commercial capabilities. AI therefore creates a paradox. Global interdependence accelerates innovation, but excessive dependence can create strategic vulnerability.

Technology Dependence and the AI Value Chain

The AI value chain is considerably more complex than the visible layer of applications such as chatbots or recommendation systems. It includes upstream inputs, infrastructure, models, platforms and applications.

Semiconductors and Advanced Computing: Advanced semiconductors are among the most strategically significant components of the AI ecosystem. AI training and inference require powerful processors, including specialised accelerators. Their production depends upon a geographically distributed ecosystem involving chip design, semiconductor fabrication, advanced manufacturing equipment, materials, packaging and testing. The OECD's 2025 mapping of the semiconductor value chain identifies significant concentration of critical inputs and specialised capabilities across particular regions, creating dependencies and potential vulnerabilities. It emphasises supply-chain diversification, information sharing and international cooperation as important responses to these vulnerabilities. Consequently, semiconductor capacity has become an important element of AI-related economic power.

Data: Data constitute another fundamental input. AI models depend on large and diverse datasets for training, testing and improvement. However, data are increasingly subject to privacy regulations, national security considerations, intellectual

property rules and digital sovereignty policies. The international business implications are substantial. Multinational enterprises operating across jurisdictions must increasingly manage differences in data localisation, privacy, cybersecurity and cross-border data-transfer regulations.

Cloud Computing and Data Centres: The development of advanced AI also depends on cloud infrastructure and large-scale data centres. This creates a connection between AI competitiveness and access to electricity, water, land, telecommunications networks and reliable energy systems. The AI economy is consequently not purely digital. It has a substantial physical infrastructure base. This means that energy security, infrastructure investment and environmental sustainability are increasingly connected with AI competitiveness.

Human Capital: Highly skilled researchers, engineers, data scientists and entrepreneurs constitute another strategic resource. Countries compete for AI talent through universities, research funding, immigration policies, technology clusters and innovation incentives. Talent mobility can therefore become part of international economic competition. At the same time, emerging economies with large pools of skilled professionals can potentially benefit from AI-related services, software development and global digital outsourcing.

Strategic Competition and the International AI Ecosystem

The international AI landscape increasingly reflects strategic competition among major economic powers. Governments are seeking to strengthen domestic AI capabilities while protecting strategically important technologies.

This competition can involve:

- public investment in AI research;
- semiconductor subsidies;
- restrictions on sensitive technology exports;
- investment screening;
- controls on advanced computing equipment;
- incentives for domestic manufacturing;
- strategic technology partnerships;
- development of national AI models;
- regulation of cross-border data flows; and
- competition over international technology standards.

The important point is that AI competition is not simply a contest between private companies. Governments increasingly influence the environment within which companies operate. The IMF notes that governments are treating AI as a new frontier of industrial policy and that strategic competition involves not only algorithms but also chips, minerals and energy. This development represents a broader transition from market-centred globalisation toward strategically managed interdependence. Countries are not necessarily abandoning international trade. Instead, they are increasingly attempting to ensure that dependence on foreign suppliers does not create unacceptable strategic vulnerability.

Export Controls, Technology Restrictions and Economic Security

Export controls represent one of the clearest examples of the interaction between technology and geopolitics. Advanced AI processors and semiconductor manufacturing technologies can have both commercial and strategic applications. Consequently, governments may restrict their transfer to particular countries or entities. From a geoeconomic perspective, export controls can serve multiple purposes. They may seek to protect national security, preserve technological advantages, restrict strategic competitors' access to sensitive technologies or encourage domestic production. However, restrictions also have unintended consequences. They can:

1. increase costs for international businesses;
2. encourage supply-chain restructuring;
3. accelerate technological substitution;
4. encourage countries to develop indigenous capabilities;
5. fragment previously integrated technology markets; and
6. create uncertainty regarding long-term investment decisions.

For multinational enterprises, the implication is particularly important. Traditional international business strategy often focused on minimising production costs through global integration. Geopolitical uncertainty increasingly requires firms to balance efficiency with resilience. Thus, the strategic question is shifting from: "Where can the company produce most efficiently?" to: "Where can the company operate efficiently while maintaining technological and geopolitical resilience?"

AI and the Transformation of International Business

AI is transforming international business at both operational and strategic levels.

International Market Intelligence: AI can analyse large quantities of economic, consumer and market information, enabling firms to identify demand patterns and emerging markets. This can improve international market selection and forecasting.

Supply-Chain Management: AI-supported forecasting can improve inventory management, demand planning, logistics and supplier monitoring. Firms can potentially identify supply-chain disruptions earlier and develop alternative sourcing strategies.

International Marketing: Generative AI can support multilingual content creation, customer segmentation and personalised marketing. This can reduce some of the costs associated with entering foreign markets.

International Human Resource Management: AI can assist multinational enterprises in recruitment, workforce planning, training and employee analytics. However, cross-border use of AI also raises questions regarding privacy, algorithmic bias and employment regulation.

Financial Decision-Making: AI can support risk analysis, fraud detection, financial forecasting and compliance monitoring. For multinational enterprises operating across multiple jurisdictions, such applications may improve the management of complex international transactions.

Strategic Decision-Making: AI can analyse geopolitical, economic and market indicators and assist firms in scenario development. It cannot eliminate uncertainty, but it can expand the volume and speed of information available to managers. The WTO's research similarly highlights AI's potential to reduce trade costs, increase productivity and enable firms to access international markets.

AI and Global Value Chains

Global value chains are increasingly influenced by AI in two contradictory ways. On one hand, AI can strengthen global integration. Improved forecasting, automated communication and intelligent logistics can make internationally dispersed production more manageable. On the other hand, geopolitical concerns can encourage regionalisation and diversification. For example, businesses may seek multiple suppliers for critical AI components rather than depending upon a single geographical location. Governments may encourage domestic or allied production of strategic technologies. The result may be a new model of globalisation in which firms continue to operate internationally but maintain alternative suppliers, duplicated production capacity and geographically diversified infrastructure. This represents a shift from “just-in-time globalisation” to “resilient globalisation.” The semiconductor industry provides a particularly clear illustration. The OECD has identified concentration and interdependence across semiconductor production as sources of potential vulnerability, suggesting that resilience requires diversification and international cooperation rather than simple isolation.

Digital Sovereignty and Technological Autonomy

The concept of digital sovereignty has become increasingly important in AI policy. It refers broadly to a state's ability to maintain meaningful control over critical digital infrastructure, data, technologies and standards. Digital sovereignty does not necessarily imply complete technological self-sufficiency. Such an objective may be economically inefficient or practically unrealistic because modern AI depends on complex international ecosystems. Instead, a more realistic approach is strategic technological autonomy. This involves:

- developing domestic capabilities in strategically important areas;
- diversifying external suppliers;
- maintaining access to international technology markets;
- investing in research and human capital;
- developing robust regulatory institutions; and
- participating actively in international technology governance.

For international businesses, this environment creates additional compliance and strategic complexity. A multinational firm may need to adapt its technology architecture according to different national rules and strategic requirements.

Regulatory Fragmentation and International Business

AI regulation is another important component of the geoeconomics of AI. Different countries and regions may adopt different approaches to AI safety, data protection, liability, intellectual property and algorithmic accountability. Such divergence can create regulatory fragmentation. The WTO has identified regulatory fragmentation as one of the important challenges associated with the rapid development of AI and international trade. For multinational enterprises, fragmented regulation can increase:

- compliance costs;
- legal uncertainty;
- technology adaptation costs;
- data-management complexity; and
- barriers to cross-border deployment.

At the same time, regulation can provide benefits by creating consumer trust, improving transparency and reducing certain forms of technological risk. Therefore, the challenge is not simply to minimise regulation. The more significant international-business objective is to develop predictable, interoperable and proportionate regulatory frameworks.

The AI Divide and Unequal Distribution of Economic Benefits

One of the central geoeconomic concerns is the possibility of an expanding AI divide between technologically advanced economies and economies with limited access to infrastructure, talent and capital. The WTO has highlighted unequal access to digital infrastructure, skills and capabilities as factors that could result in uneven distribution of AI benefits. The IMF's analysis similarly suggests that differences in AI exposure, preparedness and access to essential technologies can lead to substantially different economic outcomes across countries.

The AI divide may therefore operate through several channels: Infrastructure divide → Compute divide → Innovation divide → Productivity divide → Income and competitiveness divide. This is particularly important for developing economies. If countries primarily become consumers of AI technologies rather than developers, they may capture only a limited portion of the economic value generated by AI. However, developing economies also possess opportunities. They may leverage digital public infrastructure, large domestic markets, skilled labour, local-language data and specialised applications to develop distinctive AI capabilities.

India and the Geoeconomics of Artificial Intelligence

India represents an important case for analysing the relationship between AI, international business and geoeconomics. India possesses several potential advantages, including a large technology workforce, an extensive services sector, a significant domestic market and experience in digital public infrastructure. At the same time, India faces challenges related to advanced computing infrastructure, semiconductor capabilities, research intensity and dependence on imported technology. The Government of India approved the IndiaAI Mission on 7 March 2024, with a budgetary outlay of ₹10,371.92 crore. The mission includes public AI computing infrastructure, indigenous foundation models, datasets, startup financing, future skills and safe and trusted AI. The mission's compute component envisages AI infrastructure of more than 10,000 GPUs, while its broader objectives include strengthening domestic AI capabilities and expanding access to computational resources. This policy direction is significant from a geoeconomic perspective because it addresses several dimensions of technological dependence simultaneously. India's strategic opportunity lies not necessarily in attempting to reproduce every component of the global AI ecosystem domestically. Instead, India can pursue a combination of:

1. Domestic capability development
2. International technological partnerships
3. AI-enabled services exports
4. Development of Indian-language AI
5. AI applications based on digital public infrastructure
6. Research and higher-education capacity
7. Semiconductor and electronics ecosystem development
8. Responsible and interoperable AI governance

The objective should therefore be strategic resilience combined with continued participation in global markets.

Implications for Multinational Enterprises

The changing geoeconomic environment requires multinational enterprises to reconsider conventional international business strategies.

From Cost Efficiency to Resilience: Companies can no longer evaluate international locations only through labour costs, taxation and market size. Political risk, technology restrictions, data regulation and supply-chain resilience increasingly influence location decisions.

Multi-Sourcing: Dependence on a single supplier of critical AI components creates vulnerability. Multi-sourcing can reduce exposure to supply disruptions.

Geopolitical Risk Management: Geopolitical analysis should become part of corporate risk management. Businesses need to monitor export controls, sanctions, technology regulations, investment restrictions and changing international relations.

Regulatory Adaptability: AI-enabled multinational firms need systems capable of adapting to different regulatory environments without compromising operational efficiency.

Strategic Partnerships: Technology partnerships between firms, universities and governments can provide access to knowledge, infrastructure and talent.

Responsible AI: International competitiveness increasingly depends upon trust. Companies must address privacy, security, bias, transparency and accountability if AI is to achieve sustainable global adoption.

Towards a New Model of International Business Strategy

The emerging AI environment suggests the need for a new strategic framework combining efficiency, innovation, resilience and geopolitical awareness. A useful conceptual framework can be represented as: AI Capabilities + Global Connectivity + Strategic Resilience + Regulatory Adaptability = Sustainable International Competitiveness. AI capabilities determine the technological potential of a firm. Global connectivity provides access to international markets and knowledge. Strategic resilience protects the organisation against geopolitical and supply-chain disruptions. Regulatory adaptability enables businesses to operate across different institutional environments. This framework suggests that international competitiveness in the AI era will not depend solely on possessing the most advanced technology. Rather, it will depend upon the ability to access, develop, protect and deploy technology across a changing international environment.

International Cooperation: Competition Without Complete Fragmentation

Strategic competition does not necessarily eliminate international cooperation. Indeed, the complexity of AI makes cooperation increasingly necessary.

No single country is fully self-sufficient across the entire AI value chain. Semiconductor manufacturing equipment, raw materials, research talent, cloud infrastructure, software, data and markets are distributed internationally. Consequently, excessive fragmentation could increase costs and slow technological diffusion. The WTO argues that international cooperation can help ensure that AI-related trade contributes to broad-based growth and that international institutions have an important role in dialogue, transparency and capacity building. Cooperation could focus on:

- interoperability of AI standards;
- responsible cross-border data flows;
- semiconductor supply-chain transparency;
- research collaboration;
- AI skills development;
- digital infrastructure;
- intellectual property;
- cybersecurity;
- technical standards; and
- support for developing economies.

The objective should not be the elimination of strategic competition. Rather, the challenge is to prevent strategic competition from developing into unnecessary technological fragmentation.

Major Challenges

The geoeconomics of AI presents several major challenges.

Concentration of Technological Capabilities: A small number of countries and firms possess significant capabilities across key segments of the AI ecosystem. This concentration can create dependency and systemic vulnerability.

Supply-Chain Vulnerability: The geographic concentration of semiconductor manufacturing and specialised inputs can expose businesses to geopolitical and logistical disruptions.

Regulatory Fragmentation: Divergent AI regulations may increase the cost and complexity of international operations.

Unequal Access: Countries with limited computing capacity, research infrastructure and skilled personnel may struggle to capture the benefits of AI.

Energy Requirements: The expansion of AI infrastructure increases demand for electricity and physical infrastructure, making energy availability an important determinant of AI competitiveness.

Intellectual Property and Data Governance: Questions surrounding training data, copyrighted material, ownership of AI-generated outputs and cross-border data flows remain important unresolved issues for international businesses.

Strategic Uncertainty: Rapid technological change makes long-term investment decisions more difficult. Businesses may invest in technologies that become obsolete or restricted because of subsequent geopolitical developments.

Strategic Recommendations

Based on the analysis, several measures can strengthen the resilience and inclusiveness of the global AI economy.

Diversify Critical Technology Supply Chains: Governments and companies should identify critical dependencies and develop alternative suppliers where economically feasible.

Invest in Domestic Capabilities: Emerging economies should strengthen AI research, computing infrastructure, semiconductor capabilities, data ecosystems and technical education.

Strengthen International Cooperation: Countries should work towards compatible standards and predictable rules for digital trade and AI.

Promote Open and Responsible Innovation: Where appropriate, open datasets, research collaboration and accessible computing resources can reduce barriers to AI adoption.

Develop AI Talent: Universities and businesses should focus on interdisciplinary AI education combining technology with management, economics, law, ethics and international affairs.

Integrate Geopolitical Risk into Business Strategy: Multinational enterprises should treat geopolitical developments as strategic variables rather than external events.

Support Developing Economies: International institutions should promote access to infrastructure, skills and financing so that AI does not deepen existing technological inequalities.

Future Research Directions

The geoeconomics of AI is still an evolving field and offers several opportunities for future research. First, empirical studies can examine the relationship between AI adoption and international competitiveness across different economies. Second, researchers can analyse how semiconductor dependencies affect multinational investment decisions. Third, comparative research can investigate different national approaches to AI sovereignty and digital regulation. Fourth, sector-specific studies can examine AI's effects on international banking, manufacturing, logistics, healthcare and services. Fifth, future research can investigate whether AI will strengthen globalisation or accelerate the emergence of regional economic blocs.

Another important research area is the position of emerging economies. Countries such as India, Brazil, Indonesia and South Africa may follow different paths towards AI development based on their human capital, domestic markets, institutional capabilities and access to global technology.

Conclusion

Artificial Intelligence is increasingly becoming an important component of global economic and strategic power. Its significance extends beyond algorithms and software to the physical and institutional infrastructure that makes AI possible. Semiconductors, computing capacity, energy, data, talent, capital and digital networks constitute an interconnected ecosystem whose geographical distribution has important implications for international business. The central finding of this paper is that AI creates a complex relationship between interdependence and autonomy. International integration provides firms and countries with access to knowledge, markets, technologies and resources. However, excessive dependence on concentrated sources of critical technologies can generate strategic vulnerabilities. Consequently, governments are increasingly seeking technological resilience, while multinational enterprises are reconsidering the balance between global efficiency and geopolitical risk. For international business, this transformation has profound implications. Traditional strategies based primarily on cost efficiency and market access increasingly need to incorporate supply-chain resilience, regulatory adaptability, technological security and geopolitical risk management. The competitive advantage of firms in the AI era will therefore depend not simply on their ability to use AI but also on their ability to operate within an increasingly complex geoeconomic environment. For emerging economies, the AI transformation presents both risks and opportunities. Dependence on imported technologies can limit strategic autonomy, but investment in human capital, domestic innovation, digital infrastructure and international partnerships can create new pathways for participation in the global AI economy. India's IndiaAI Mission illustrates an effort to build domestic capabilities while remaining connected to the international technology ecosystem. Ultimately, the future of AI is unlikely to be determined exclusively by technological competition. It will also depend upon how countries and businesses manage interdependence. A fragmented global AI economy may increase resilience in certain strategic areas but could also raise costs and restrict technological diffusion. Conversely, excessive dependence may create vulnerabilities. The sustainable path therefore lies in strategic diversification, responsible innovation, international cooperation and the development of resilient technological capabilities. The geoeconomics of AI consequently represents more than a new field of technology policy. It is becoming an important framework for understanding the future of international business, global value chains, economic security and the distribution of economic power in the twenty-first century.

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