

Managing Global AI Rivalry



Talal Abu-Ghazaleh

Rivalry between the two world superpowers today, the USA and China, has never been more intense. Swords have long been drawn, and the fight for technology dominance and mastery is well underway. The new battleground is the world of AI, which promises great riches for the nation that innovates in services, products, and technologies for which there is an unprecedented appetite globally. I have spoken at length about the promises that AI brings and the need for global collaboration in this field for the greater good of mankind, which makes it a primary concern in the strategies of nations, particularly in the case of these two giants.

On May 14, 2024, high-level envoys from the US and China engaged in closed-door talks in Geneva to discuss the implications of emerging AI. I see collaboration between these two nations as essential to build a thriving AI ecosystem, as after all, they are the global leading AI authorities. The discussions revolved around ensuring that AI technologies do not pose existential risks, including potential weaponization or misuse of AI, particularly in areas like deep fakes and disinformation campaigns. Safety issues associated with advanced AI systems were also on the agenda, with experts on both sides emphasizing that both nations have much to lose if AI becomes weaponized. It seems, though, that the perspectives of these governments and their ambitions are too different from each other to allow for the establishment of a transnational AI governance framework.

This, however, does not exclude the possibility of collaborative efforts, talks, and engagements to push a healthy AI agenda forward. AI has brought up many

questions, and specialists have warned of important risks that must be controlled and mitigated, which I believe must be done through official meetings between government representatives, as well as through technological and scientific dialogues between experts on both sides.

It is clear that both nations are in this game to win it, with both engaged in policymaking. President Joe Biden's October 2023 Executive Order requires US agencies to step up their use of AI and introduce regulation. China is emphasizing the importance of AI development, with the Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC) issuing strict regulations regarding the use of AI algorithms and AI-generated content.

Both nations are working diligently to shape the space of AI governance. The US has established multiple global partnerships focusing on AI governance and it leads the UN in drafting a resolution on 'safe, secure, and trustworthy AI systems for sustainable development'. Not to be outdone, China has also been hard at work, announcing the Global AI Governance Institute in 2023 and holding the yearly World AI Conference in Shanghai. China is also cosponsoring a resolution at the UN in the area of enhancing international cooperation on AI capacity building. As the Chair of the Consortium for Sustainable Urbanization, I wholeheartedly support sustainable AI development, particularly in light of the massive amounts of resources being used to develop these systems, which I have spoken about previously.

It is clear that both nations recognize the importance of the other in the sphere of AI despite having different agendas. I say that constructive dialogue must be encouraged, as AI is a cross-border technology that has the potential to affect every sector globally. With much to be discussed and solved, there has never been a better time to engage in bilateral talks and mutual dialogue than the present.

I salute the efforts of both these nations and their commitment to developing a safe global AI sector, offering whatever resources I have at my disposal under TAG.Global to further global AI development.