

## Artificial Intelligence and the Changing Character of Violence: A Comparative Analysis of Security Dynamics in the United Kingdom and Africa

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**ABSTRACT:** The role of artificial intelligence (AI) in the modern system of security is gradually transforming and reshaping the nature of violence in the global contexts. Although AI is perceived as a technologically neutral innovation, the security of AI is highly contextualized by political, institutional, and regulatory contexts. This paper compares the intersection of AI with the dynamics of security in the United Kingdom and African states with a specific focus on defence, intelligence, policing, counterterrorism, and the overall system of governance. Based on theoretical arguments about remote warfare, algorithmic governance, surveillance-based security, and hybrid threats, the paper posits that AI alters the actor, means, and space of violence in a manner that looks beyond the traditional kinetic warfare. The analysis unveils that the United Kingdom introduces AI in relatively advanced technological systems and unified frameworks of regulations, which are supported by civilian governance and

ethical control systems. By comparison, AI implementation in most African settings is realized in settings characterized by unequal institutional capacity, externality to technologies and less robust regulatory protection. Such disparities define contrasting security performances, even in the case of similar technologies used. Regardless of these distinctions, both scenarios are characterized by common weaknesses such as the problem of algorithmic bias, lack of accountability, and the decentralization of AI abilities to non-state actors. Nonetheless, the impacts of these risks are uneven, and the vulnerability of governance in most of the African contexts increases the possibility of abuse and authoritarianism supported by AI. The paper concludes that AI is not only a technical tool but a force-shifting technology the effects of which on violence depend on the context. The study therefore recommends increased equitable global AI governance as well as enhanced UK-Africa collaboration based on ethical principles, institutional capacity development, and context-specific security implementations.

**Keywords:** *Artificial Intelligence, Violence*

## **Introduction**

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become a central phenomenon in the modern security governance, radically transforming nature, structure, and regulation of violence in societies. By means of AI-driven surveillance algorithms and autonomous systems, predictive policing, and data-focused intelligence analysis, AI is actively shaping the processes of state anticipation of threats, use of force, and control of security spaces. These processes herald an end of traditional violence in favor of more technologically mediated, remote and hybrid security practices. Although AI technologies are being diffused globally, they do not have equally distributed security implications. In modern security settings like the United Kingdom, AI is predominantly implicit in traditional institutional structures, backed up with well-developed technological infrastructure, regulatory controls, and ethical governance systems.

Conversely, AI overlaps with existing security issues found in most African settings, which are defined by ineffective institutional capacity, skewed technology uptake, reliance on the outside world, and weak accountability frameworks. Consequently,

corresponding AI-based applications can produce stabilizing effects in one setting and contribute to insecurity, abuse of surveillance, or lack of governance in another. The key issue, thus, is a lack of systematic comparative knowledge concerning the manner in which AI is transforming the nature of violence in the context of asymmetrical security, like the United Kingdom and Africa. The current scholarship and policy discussion has a technologically deterministic or regionally siloed approach that does not look at how differences in governance capacity, political economy, and regulatory maturity situate the security consequences of AI implementation. This disconnect restricts the design of context-specific policies and the creation of appropriate AI governance frameworks that can tackle the common risks, as well as divergent vulnerabilities. To address this issue, this paper aims at relatively analyzing the security dynamics that come along with AI-powered changes in violence in the United Kingdom and Africa, with the aim of defining the major disparities, shared issues, and policy-relevant tracks toward responsible and balanced AI governance.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The broad objective of this study is to critically examine how artificial intelligence is reshaping the character of violence and security governance in asymmetrical contexts, using the United Kingdom and Africa as comparative cases.

#### **Specifically, the study seeks to:**

1. Assess how AI technologies are transforming the methods, actors, and organization of violence in the United Kingdom and selected African states.
2. Compare the influence of institutional capacity, technological infrastructure, and governance frameworks on AI-driven security outcomes across the UK and Africa.
3. Identify and analyze the shared risks and context-specific vulnerabilities arising from AI-enabled security practices, including implications for accountability, ethical governance, and the role of non-state actors.

## Conceptualising AI and the Changing Character of Violence

Technological advancements have had a tremendous influence on the development of violence in the digital era, and artificial intelligence (AI) has become one of the most transformative technologies in the security practice of the state and non-state (November, 2021). The conventional concept of violence, which is greatly characterized by physical and kinetic engagement, is increasingly becoming supplemented or replaced by technologically mediated violence, wherein the protagonists, means and locus of violence are being continuously reconstituted. Specifically, AI allows conducting security operations in a more specificized, automated, and data-driven manner, affecting the organization of violence and its experience.

These transformations can be explained using the below key concepts;

**Remote warfare** is defined as the effort to project force without physical presence, commonly via drones, autonomous systems, or cyber operations enabling the state or non-state actor to engage targets with minimal physical risk to personnel (Biegon & Watts, 2022).

The concept of **algorithmic governance** states that AI-based mechanisms are used to make or advise decisions related to the running of security, including predictive policing and threat detection, casting significant doubts on visibility, responsibility, and ethics (Cantero Gamito and Ebers, 2020).

**Surveillance-based security** suggests the power of AI in tracking people, potentially dangerous incidents, and facilitating pre-emptive measures, which will help to elevate security, yet create new opportunities of misuse or bias (Kukkadapu, 2025).

Lastly, the hybrid threats reflect the combination of traditional, cyber, and irregular techniques, in which AI becomes a force multiplier to the state and non-state actors, and the logic of war is transformed, the new one being built upon.

All these theoretical devices contribute to developing the picture of the transforming nature of violence provided by AI. Instead of being concentrated in physical spaces, on a digital level, or in a physical fight, violence is becoming decentralized,

operating over digital, social, and spatial platforms, which are mediated by algorithms, predictive systems, and autonomous systems. This change does not only shift the way violence is practiced, but also the participants of violence, granting non-state actors and individual forces the ability to exert powers that had only been previously held by state actors. It also transforms the dynamics of time and space in which conflict occurs such that security interventions become quicker, more focused, and less visible to the masses.

These changes are critical to the comparative security processes in the United Kingdom and the African states. Although the UK has a well-developed technological base, institutional capability, and regulatory frameworks that are capable of controlling and preventing the risks involved with AI-based security practices, most African settings face the limitations of disproportionate adoption, poor governance capabilities, and reliance on foreign technologies. These imbalances underscore the need to study not just the capabilities suggested by AI but the more general political, institutional and ethical landscapes within which AI-driven security practices operate.

### **AI and Security Governance in the United Kingdom**

The United Kingdom has increasingly incorporated artificial intelligence into its security infrastructure in defence, intelligence, policing and counterterrorism (Yu and Carroll, 2021). AI is used as an enabler to intelligence processing, anticipating threats, coordinating operations, and supporting decisions, as part of a more general move to data-driven security governance. Within the UK context, there is a nexus between the usage of AI and the modernisation agenda of national security which is also embedded in the well-established institutional and legislative frameworks.

AI aids capabilities in the defence and intelligence community, including analysis of massive volumes of data, intelligence fusion via computer, surveillance optimization, and creation of autonomous or semi-autonomous applications (Carlo, 2020). The applications exist in a highly advanced technological ecosystem comprised of government agencies, defence contractors and research institutions. This ecosystem does not only enable innovation but also strengthens institutional control via formal

procurement procedures, security clearances, and strategic control systems. AI has also acquired a greater role with respect to domestic security, particularly in policing and counterterrorism. Predictive analytics, facial recognition technologies, and algorithmic risk assessment tools are used to conduct increased situational awareness and preventative security measures (Ferguson, 2016). These technologies have made businesses operations more efficient, but have also spawned serious public and legal attention, especially concerning matters of privacy, data protection and algorithmic bias. The nature of such arguments highlights the contested aspect of AI-led security, even in technologically advanced democracies.

The UK is moving to the governance levels of strong regulatory control and ethical principles, and one of the proposed conceptual frameworks is centered on validation, accreditation, and ethical standards (Stogiannos et al., 2023). The factors that impact the application of AI in security are legal tools, data protection frameworks and ethics that place emphasis on proportionality, accountability and ethical compliance with human rights. The use of AI technologies should be regulated by civilian control, i.e., by the parliamentary oversight and third-party regulators since it is also necessary to prevent their potential abuse. Civil-military relations also enhance this form of governance by keeping the AI-driven defence capabilities politically controlled and held to democratic accountability.

These aspects form a more or less controlled and institutionalised paradigm of AI utilisation in UK security services. Even though difficulties exist, especially in terms of innovation and ethical protection, the case with the UK shows that well-developed technological capacity, regulatory maturity, and good civil-military relations can build more organized and responsible AI use in security governance. This model offers a significant yardstick of comparative analysis against the African security environments whereby analogous technologies tend to run under diverse institutional and regulatory provisions.

### **AI, Insecurity, and Governance Challenges in Africa**

Applications of artificial intelligence to security scenarios in African states are being applied in the context of widespread insecurity, unstable institutional ability, and

governance challenges of multiple dimensions. In contrast to the comparatively standardised and regulated use of AI with sophisticated security frameworks, AI implementation in most African regions is influenced by an underlying violence, namely, insurgency, organised crime, electoral violence, and dramatic militarisation of digital environments. Consequently, AI tends to interact with the insecurity in a manner that is highly conditioned by the political, economic, and institutional constraints. AI-empowered technologies are used in counterinsurgency and internal security activities, including surveillance, intelligence collection, and population tracking, especially in areas prone to extremist violence and armed groups (Abiade, 2025). On the same note, AI is being embraced in curbing organised crime, cybercrime, and transnational criminal networks, which use digital platforms to coordinate and finance terrorism. In electoral times, AI-based surveillance and data analytics are occasionally used to control the masses, however, they can also be directed against political rivals, quell opposition, or manipulate factual landscapes thus complicating the distinction between the provision of security and the control of politics.

One of the prevalent characteristics of AI applications in the context of African governance of security is the issue of unequal adoption and foreign reliance (Frimpong, 2025). Most states depend on foreign governments or commercial technology companies to provide AI infrastructure, software and knowledge. This reliance restricts the capacity of domestic security technologies, creates doubts regarding the sovereignty of data, and constrains the capability of states to localize AI systems to local security requirements and social settings. Without robust domestic technological systems, AI implementation tends to focus on short-term security benefits rather than long-term governance. The regulatory and ethical control systems are inadequate or undeveloped in most African settings. The regulatory laws on data protection, surveillance, and algorithmic responsibility tend to be overly disjointed, enforced poorly or not at all (Sutherland, 2018). This regulatory vacuum puts at risk AI abuse within the framework of the weak democratic institutions and the absence of a well-developed constraint of executive authority. In turn, AI-based security practices can become a source of reinforced

previous trends of coercion, marginalization, and repression, instead of a source of sustainable security practices.

When AI, weak governance, and political insecurity converge, there are serious apprehensions on the possibility of authoritarian practices through AI. Surveillance technologies, foreseeability policing instruments, and electronic surveillance could be applied in order to consolidate the power of the regime, limit the civic space, and make intrusive security practices acceptable in the name of safety of the people. These dynamics show the necessity to find AI-related security practices in the broader political and institutional context, rather than viewing AI as a neutral or universally useful tool of security. The African experience confirms the idea that AI security implications are highly contextual. Despite the fact that AI can enhance security responses, the application of this technology in a setting where there are unequal capacities, dependence on external forces and lack of supervision can deteriorate the state of insecurity and lack of governance. This is where the need to study comparatively where other scenarios such as the United Kingdom where stronger institutions and regulatory frameworks are stipulating alternative security impacts of similar technologies.

### **Comparative Analysis: Divergent Security Pathways and Shared Vulnerabilities**

Comparative evaluation of the artificial intelligence in the United Kingdom and African state security environments presents two fundamentally distinct trajectories due to the technological capacity differences, the level of governance, and the perception of threat. Though the contexts in question involve AI as a means toward the management of modern sources of security risks, the circumstances, in which it is implemented, have a major effect on how it may affect the nature of violence and security regulation. The United Kingdom has a high level of AI capacity as it has a developed technological infrastructure and has maintained an investment in research and development as well as alignment between state institutions, the private industry and the academic world. This ability allows a systematized and long-term application of AI to security operations with local experience and long-term planning. However, on the contrary, the technology infrastructure in many African states is largely disjointed, and many of them depend on AI technologies and knowledge available

outside their own borders. This disproportion impairs on-the-ground ownership, flexibility to locale-specific hazards, and amplifies reliance on external players in essential security operations.

The perception of threats also draws a more distinct line between AI security pathways in the two settings. In the UK, AI is largely positioned as a solution to more effective preventative security, intelligence efficiency, and risk management in reaction to both terrorism, cyber threats, and multifaceted transnational risks. In African contexts, AI is further incorporated more directly in attempts to react to both short-term and long-term insecurity threats, such as insurgency, organised crime, and political instability. These contrasting threat landscapes delineate the urgency as well as the way AI technologies are implemented. One of the greatest areas of divergence is governance maturity. The UK has a comparatively undiluted governance structure based on legal protections, moral codes and civilian checks and balances limiting the application of AI in security. Despite the controversies, these structures offer means of accountability and social investigation. Contrastingly, a large proportion of African states are governed by weaker or unbalanced regulatory frameworks, in which the monitoring systems are inadequate, and enforcement is restricted. Consequently, AI-based security practices can be implemented with little transparency, which can lead to the risk of abuse and politicisation.

In spite of these differences, the UK and African scenes have significant vulnerabilities which can be traced to AI-driven security practice. In both contexts, algorithmic bias poses risk, especially when the data systems recreate social injustices or support discriminatory actions. There are also the flaws of responsibility, as the transparency of AI decision-making makes it harder to allocate the responsibility of security results. Moreover, the spread of the AI tools to non-state actors, such as criminal networks, extremist groups, and commercial surveillance companies, poses common problems that are beyond regional divisions.

Nevertheless, the effects of such weaknesses are highly asymmetrical. The UK has institutional protections and legal redress systems that can ameliorate the damages of AI misuse to some extent. In other African settings, associated vulnerabilities can strengthen any underlying faults in governance, and increase societal suspicion, as

well as coercive and exclusionary trends. This asymmetry highlights the significance of comparative analysis to not just comprehend the common risks of AI-driven security practices but also the uneven allocation of the effects of these practices to global security settings.

### **Position and Policy Implications**

The analysis of AI-based security relations in the United Kingdom and Africa reveals the importance of ethical and situation-driven approach to the regulation of artificial intelligence in the security sphere. This paper advances the normative stand that AI must be used to improve human security, strengthen democratic accountability, and reduce the probability of technological harm, as opposed to acting as an instrument of unregulated coercion or marginalization. Ethical Responsible AI operation in security should thus not only be informed by technical effectiveness but also ethical principles, institutional protection as well as the consideration of societal impact.

On a global level, the results point to the inefficiency of current AI governance systems that tend to reflect the priorities and capacities of the technologically developed states with insufficient consideration of asymmetrical security conditions. Global AI regulation needs to be more equitable, to consider the differences in the technological ability and make sure that new rules on AI, surveillance, and autonomous systems cannot unintentionally support global power structures. These systems should promote openness, responsibility and collective ownership of AI security solutions and their deployment.

In this regard the UK-Africa partnership is a definitive pathway to the sustainable and equitable AI security. Cooperation should focus on capacity building in the design of regulations, institutional controls and ethical governance, rather than the focus on technological transfer. This involves reinforcing the creation of data protection frameworks, accountability, and professional skill that would allow African states to attain a sense of control over AI-based security technologies. To make the security technologies to be sensitive to the unique social and political context, co-production of AI solutions, where local institutions and stakeholders are involved, is crucial.

UK-Africa AI security engagement should also be based on ethical standards. The risks of authoritarian governance through AI and the lack of trust in security agencies can be reduced by shared values of proportionality, respect of human rights, and civilian control. Integrating these standards in training, procurement and operations processes can help achieve more legitimate and sustainable security results.

Generally, the development of responsible AI use in the security domain needs to go beyond highly technological or militarised solutions to the frameworks of governance that acknowledge the social and political aspects of violence. Through fair collaboration, building the capacity to regulate and encourage context-sensitive application, UK-Africa partnerships can positively influence the development of AI-based security practices that will not cause insecurity but enhance stability.

## **Conclusion**

This paper concludes that artificial intelligence is neither a neutral or strictly technical security tool, but a power instrumentation technology whose impacts on the nature of violence are highly predetermined and conditioned by political, institutional, and governance settings. The comparison of United Kingdom and African state security dynamics shows that the same AI technologies can yield radically different results, as either relatively manageable and responsible security activities or exacerbated insecurity and governance shortcomings.

The relative approach adopted in this paper points out the flaws of the one-size-fits-all approach to AI regulation in the field of security. It highlights that imbalance in technological capabilities, regulatory maturity, and institutional controls is to be considered when assessing the risks and benefits of AI-driven security practices. Without this sensitivity, the AI governance mechanisms throughout the world allow reinforcing the existing networks of power and uneven security.

Finally, the paper highlights that a more just and efficient AI regulation necessitates a long-term comparative study and collaborative involvement. Capacity building, ethical and context aware application based balanced UK-Africa security partnerships provide a way forward to integrating AI in a way that maximizes human security and is not a major contributor to violence and exclusion.

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