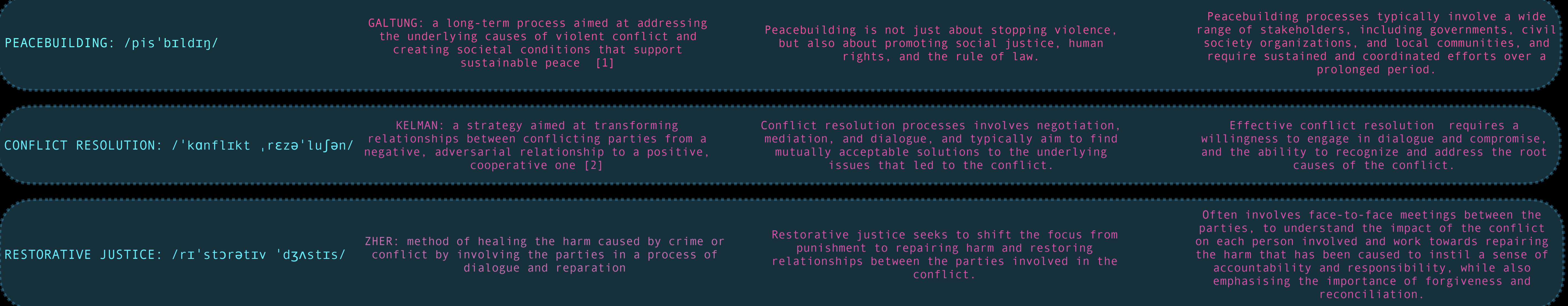


Navigating AI in Peacebuilding, Conflict Resolution, and Restorative Justice Under the Threat of and Panoptic Technocracy

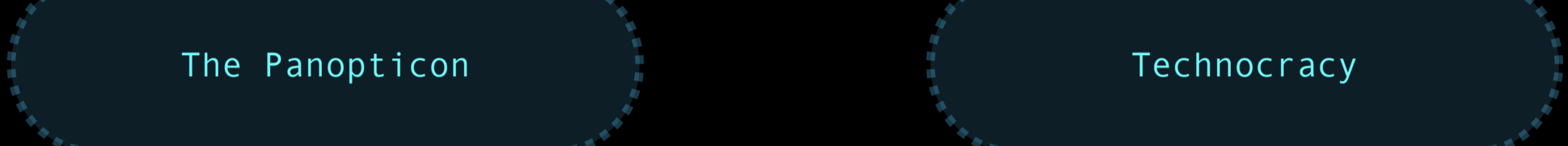
Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a powerful tool that can be used in various fields, from healthcare and finance to communication and education. With advanced AI language models such as ChatGPT, the technology can converse with users, answer questions, and even help draft written content. In peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and restorative justice practices AI-powered tools can improve communication between conflicting parties, identify patterns in social unrest, and offer unbiased recommendations to negotiators and policymakers.

There are also potential dangers and risks associated with AI's use, including perpetuating bias, misrepresenting information, and exacerbating conflicts unintentionally. The rise of a panoptic technocracy, which combines pervasive surveillance and control with governance led by technical experts, is also a concern. While AI presents both opportunities and challenges, it is crucial to address its inherent dangers, develop ethical guidelines, and promote transparency and collaboration to ensure responsible use.



Panoptic technocracy: /pən'ɒptɪk tɛk'nɒkrəsi/

System of governance led by technical experts, in which decision-making is primarily driven by data and technical knowledge, and pervasive surveillance and control are used to maintain order and compliance



The panopticon was originally proposed by the philosopher Jeremy Bentham in the 18th century as a theoretical prison design in which a central watchtower allowed for the constant surveillance of inmates, who were never sure when they were being watched, inducing a state of self-discipline and compliance due to the fear of being observed. The panopticon has become a metaphor for pervasive surveillance and control in digital spaces today.

Technocracy refers to a system of governance in which decision-making is based on technical knowledge and expertise, rather than political or ideological considerations. In a technocracy, power is concentrated in the hands of "technical experts" or elites who are seen as best equipped to make decisions for the good of society.

PEACEBUILDING CONFLICT RESOLUTION RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

THE GOOD Collaboration and Cross-Cultural Understanding Support for Effective Negotiations Use in Empowering Local Communities

AI can be used to forecast violent outbreaks or identify patterns that may lead to conflicts, allowing organizations to take proactive measures to prevent them. ChatGPT can also facilitate communication between conflicting parties by providing real-time translations, breaking down language barriers and promoting dialogue.

AI systems can synthesise large amounts of data to identify patterns and trends and can offer insights to efficiently negotiate across parties, facilitating a deeper understanding of the underlying issues in a conflict.

AI can facilitate community engagement and participation in restorative justice processes. Natural language processing and sentiment analysis can be used to analyze feedback from community members, enabling a more inclusive and responsive approach to restorative justice. Chatbots and virtual assistants can also be used to provide information and resources to community members, increasing accessibility and participation.

CASE STUDY: The Syrian Civil War

The Syrian Civil War, beginning in 2011, has resulted in an ongoing complex humanitarian crisis, displacement of millions of people, and loss of countless lives. In this context, several organizations and initiatives have employed AI technologies to support collaboration, cross-cultural understanding, effective negotiations, and the empowerment of local communities.

An initiative called the "Syria Digital Lab" was established to use AI-driven language translation tools to break down communication barriers between Syrian refugees and aid workers. By providing real-time translations of Arabic to other languages, the platform facilitated better understanding and cooperation between refugees and aid organizations, allowing them to collaborate more effectively in addressing the humanitarian crisis. [5]

In 2016, the United Nations used AI-driven sentiment analysis to collect and verify data on human rights violations and war crimes in Syria. By enabling citizens to report incidents through a secure platform, the project empowered local communities to document their experiences and hold criminals accountable. The AI system was used to synthesise the data, identify patterns, and corroborate reports to ensure accuracy. This information was then shared with international organizations, human rights groups, and policy-makers to inform their decisions and actions related to the Syrian crisis. [7]

AI algorithms trained on biased data sets can lead to unjust outcomes for specific demographics. The use of potentially discriminatory AI tools may erode trust in restorative justice processes and alienate marginalized communities, ultimately hindering the effectiveness of these initiatives in fostering healing, reconciliation, and social cohesion.

THE BAD Misinformation and Ethical Concerns Erosion of Trust Discrimination and Bias Perpetuation

Misinformation and ethical concerns could undermine trust, amplify existing conflicts, and impede collaborative efforts to resolve disputes in the context of peacebuilding. Biased algorithms, false narratives, and privacy violations, may potentially undermine trust, amplify existing conflicts, and impede collaborative efforts to resolve disputes.

"Deepfakes", or AI generated images and videos can diminish privacy and misinform viewers. Deepfakes have been used to create fake videos of political figures, which can be used to manipulate public opinion and discredit opponents. In the context of conflict resolution, the use of deepfakes could severely undermine trust between negotiating parties and derail the entire process.

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CASE STUDY: 2028 Nagorno-Karabakh conflict

- During the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan in 2028, social media platforms were flooded with false narratives and misinformation, fueled by AI-generated content that amplified divisive messages and targeted specific audiences.
- Biased algorithms selectively promoted certain narratives, leading to a polarized environment and exacerbating the conflict.
- Data concerns and privacy violations emerged as a significant ethical concern during the conflict. [8]
- The use of facial recognition software by both sides to identify enemy combatants and civilians raised concerns about privacy violations and the potential misuse of personal data.

CASE STUDY: Ali Bongo 2018

- In 2018, a video of Gabon's President Ali Bongo appeared to address the nation after months of absence due to health issues.
- Authenticity of the video was called into question, and many speculated that it was a deepfake created to cause concerns about the president's health and maintain political stability.
- Research report from Australian Strategic Policy Institute shows the controversy surrounding the video led to increased tension and mistrust among the Gabonese people and opposition groups. [9]
- Escalations caused coup attempt by a faction of the military in January 2019, citing the deepfake video as evidence of a cover-up and against the president's health.
- Although the coup attempt was unsuccessful, it demonstrated the potential of deepfakes to increase mistrust and heighten tensions in a politically unstable environment.

CASE STUDY: COMPAS Risk Assessment

- The COMPAS (Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions) risk assessment tool is an algorithmic system designed to predict the likelihood of a defendant's recidivism.
- Used by courts and correctional facilities in the United States to inform decisions regarding pretrial release, sentencing, and parole. The tool evaluates individuals based on a variety of factors, including criminal history, age, and employment status.
- Tulane University study finds disproportionately assign higher risk scores to African American and woman defendants. [10]

THE UGLY Consolidation of Power and Censorship Isolation and Lack of Community Engagement Diminished Role of Human Agency

Technocratic elites may use AI tools to suppress opposition and consolidate power, as seen in some authoritarian regimes' use of AI-driven censorship and surveillance. This can further complicate peacebuilding initiatives by exacerbating existing social divides and making it more difficult to achieve lasting peace. As those in power consolidate their control over AI technologies, they can use them to maintain their positions of authority, leading to an increasingly oppressive and unequal society, as illustrated by the social credit system in China.

As AI systems become more sophisticated and decision-makers increasingly rely on AI-generated insights, human empathy, creativity, and understanding may be overshadowed. In conflict, nuanced understanding of cultural, historical, and emotional factors is crucial for effective mediation. Overreliance on AI-generated insights could neglect these critical aspects and lead to unsustainable resolutions. The automation of conflict resolution may deepen disenfranchisement without access to or control over AI systems, exacerbating existing power imbalances and hindering genuine resolution.

Use of AI may shift the focus away from human interaction and undermine the central values of restorative justice. The risk of over-reliance on AI-generated data may lead to a loss of context and nuance. Decisions made solely on the basis of data may overlook important factors such as cultural differences, power dynamics, and emotional experiences, which are essential to restorative justice processes.

CASE STUDY: China's Social Credit System

China's Social Credit System, launched in 2014, was created to assess the trustworthiness of its citizens by monitoring their behavior, both online and offline, and assigning them a credit score. While the system claims to promote good behavior and social order, it has raised concerns about the consolidation of power, censorship, diminished human agency, and the lack of community engagement. [11]

Facial recognition, big data analytics, and AI-driven surveillance enable the Chinese government to track citizens' movements, purchases, and online activities, allowing authorities to exercise control over the population and suppress dissenting voices. For instance, individuals with low social credit scores can face restrictions on travel, job opportunities, and access to social services, effectively censoring and marginalizing those who do not conform to the government's expectations.

AI-powered surveillance can render an environment of fear and suspicion among the populace, leading to self-censorship and isolation, as individuals become wary of engaging with their communities or expressing their opinions openly. In fear of being censured by the system, this lack of community engagement and open dialogue can hinder social cohesion and create barriers to addressing systemic challenges and fostering collective action.

The Social Credit System relies on AI-generated insights to make critical decisions that impact citizens' lives. This reliance can diminish the role of human agency and empathy in decision-making processes, as AI systems may not fully account for the nuances of human behavior and the diverse circumstances that can influence one's actions. As a result, citizens may be unfairly penalized or subjected to biased decisions, without the opportunity to explain or contest the AI-generated assessment of their behaviour.

REFLECTIONS Accessibility and Transparency Ethical Standards Collaboration and Digital Literacy

Enhancing AI transparency and explainability is necessary to counter the panoptic effects of pervasive surveillance and control. Making AI systems more understandable to both experts and non-experts, stakeholders can better scrutinize the workings of these technologies and ensure they are being used ethically and responsibly. Transparency initiatives can also help to build trust among conflicting parties and foster a more open and collaborative environment for conflict resolution.

Developing guidelines and ethical standards for AI is a vital step towards ensuring that these technologies are employed in a responsible and ethical manner. Such guidelines should address issues like data privacy, algorithmic fairness, transparency, and accountability, as well as the importance of human involvement in decision-making processes. Adhering to ethical standards, practitioners can mitigate the risks associated with AI use and promote its positive impact on conflict management.

Encouraging collaboration between AI developers, peacebuilding practitioners, and policymakers can help prevent the rise of a panoptic technocracy. Involving a diverse range of perspectives in the development and deployment of AI systems, it is possible to ensure that these technologies are designed and used in ways that prioritise human needs, rights, and agency, rather than simply serving the interests of technocratic elites.

Fostering digital literacy and critical thinking skills among the public is essential to equip individuals with the knowledge and skills to understand, evaluate, and question AI-generated content, so they can become more resilient to misinformation, manipulation, and the erosive effects of pervasive surveillance. [4]

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