

PROPOSE STRATEGIC RESTRAINT FOR G20 CENSUS ON AI



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In 2023, shortly before his death, the late Henry Kissinger joined Graham Allison in warning of potentially “catastrophic consequences” unless the United States and China opened serious discussions to prevent an uncontrolled artificial intelligence arms race.

That warning is more urgent than ever. The rare convergence among rival American technology leaders reinforces Kissinger’s warning: even those most invested in the success of AI acknowledge that the development of frontier AI may need to slow so that safeguards and institutions can keep pace with its rapidly expanding capabilities.

The upcoming G20 therefore faces a test it cannot afford to fail: how to prevent US-China competition in artificial intelligence from endangering public safety, international security, and human welfare alike.

AI is no longer confined to laboratories, nor is it a product confined to the digital world. It is increasingly central to economic growth and trade, with applications in manufacturing, health care, and public administration.

It must therefore be developed and applied for the good and benefit of all, not as an instrument for diminishing the security or prosperity of others.

Consensus can begin by recognizing the respective strengths of the two leading AI powers. The United States retains exceptional capabilities in frontier models, advanced semiconductors, and attendant foundational software. China, meanwhile, combines increasingly capable and efficient models with a broad industrial system, infrastructure, and particular strength in applying AI at scale across manufacturing, logistics, energy, health, and public services.

These complementary strengths remain underutilized because the idea of an AI race has led to an industry that, until recently, weighed the risks of rapid development against the supposed imperative of “beating” the other side at the technological frontier and consistently found those risks worth taking.

Neither these advances nor the strategic assumptions guiding them exist in a vacuum. As the competitive mindset and resistance to cooperation on shared standards begin to recede, we must seize this opportunity: stop treating every technological advance as a zero-sum victory or defeat and instead work together to strengthen our shared global AI ecosystem.

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For the G20 meeting, two priorities follow:

First, the United States and China should establish a framework of strategic restraint for the G20 summit based on the recent successful Xi-Trump summit and their first bilateral talk to be held in November. China's nuclear doctrine offers a useful point of reference: a commitment to no first use of AI-enabled autonomous weapon systems should be the starting point.

Both countries, together with the broader international community, should declare that they will not be the first to deploy autonomous AI weapon systems capable of initiating armed hostilities without meaningful human authorization.

They should affirm that humans must retain responsibility for decisions to use force and that no AI system may independently authorize or launch nuclear weapons or select and engage human targets without meaningful human control.

Further, because states may interpret "first use" differently, such a declaration must be applied to all other G20 countries, sustained expert dialogue, crisis hotlines, incident-notification procedures, shared terminology, and a commitment to developing confidence-building measures.

Second, AI governance must not fracture into rival institutional camps. At present, the US-led Pax Silica initiative and the China-founded World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organization stand apart. Their members should be brought into dialogue through the G20 or under a shared United Nations umbrella to develop interoperable safety standards, common risk definitions, reciprocal restraint, and wider access to the benefits of AI.

To reinforce these interoperable safety standards and common risk definitions, and to focus AI development on the collective benefit of humanity rather than on harming a competitor, we should convene an AI summit to facilitate exchanges among companies and experts.

Governments should participate alongside companies, scientists, technical experts, universities, and civil society, thereby fostering stronger private-sector cooperation on safe research, industry standards, and beneficial applications.

The Chinese and US AI ecosystems are not siloed; rather, they are parts of a shared global ecosystem on which scientists, companies, and people depend. Forcing every country to choose one system or the other would fragment standards, duplicate costs, and turn technology with global promise into another source of division.

Instead, we should place ourselves on the same side of the table against shared risks through a no-first-use commitment, accompanied by inclusive institutions and continuing expert exchange. Ensuring that artificial intelligence advances human development, stability, and shared prosperity is a responsibility we owe to future generations.