



Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Most of the key technologies of today are directly enabled, or enhanced, by information technology. Continuing progress in artificial intelligence and machine learning are essential to the development of advanced robots, autonomous vehicles and in automation tools. The development of artificial intelligence promises many revolutionary developments, but it has also worried many who believe the reality outlined in the Terminator film series of robots becoming self-aware and terminating the human species.

Referring to artificial intelligence (AI) which aims to simulate intelligent behaviour or specifically human behaviour, Elon Musk, the tech giant has warned of the emerging dangers, citing AI as being more dangerous for America than the nuclear bomb possessing North Korea. He may not be wrong as Facebook was forced to shut down its AI robots after they developed a new language between themselves that no human was to be able to interpret.

Developments in the AI field is potentially a hurdle for the Muslim world to deal with. In our current condition, many of the rulers already lag behind the rest of the developed world, where technology in industry and agriculture is in need of urgent progress. By not keeping up with the growing use of AI, the Muslim world is set to fall behind to even deeper levels.

A problem closer to home is the loss of jobs to this new technology. Robots and AI are the next stage in automation which has already resulted in the loss of many jobs and in the future it will take even more. Thinkers such as Yuval Noah Harari have extrapolated the issue to such an extent that the 'rise of the useless class' will result, where there will be a small super human class which holds most of the power and wealth and a majority 'underclass' which will find it impossible to serve any economic value to society and will wallow in poverty as a result.

AI however, is not the horror story it can appear, as many strides have been made in the field to serve humanity. Rather than developing technology for no purpose except to take the next step, some have focused on using AI and robots to provide help. The telepresence robot called AV1, is one such example where chronically ill children are able to avoid extreme loneliness and lack of education by being present in the classroom through the small robot that acts as its eyes and ears. This has enabled children to secure a future and experience the world outside their rooms.

Japan is also using AI to help its demographic crisis that threatens its very existence. With one of the lowest birth-rates in the world, Japan is facing the simple logistical problem of having enough humans for the country to function. Robots have been developed to take on many tasks including automating the service sector, ensuring hotels can run using mostly robots designed to mimic human behaviour. Robots have also been envisioned to serve society by addressing social issues, providing interaction and company for those seeking to stave off loneliness. Furthermore, solutions in caring for the elderly have been made easier by 'Robear', a bear shaped robot capable of lifting patients out of beds and into wheelchairs, normally requiring several care workers.

Clearly there is a good and bad side to AI as it is simply a technology which like a phone or a car, can be used for good or bad purposes. Whereas no one can really predict whether the Terminator will be initiated, what we can see is that the result of technology greatly depends on the intention for its use and the thinking and values of the person who created it. In the capitalist framework the doomsday vision presented by Harai is entirely possible. Without the correct system, something as powerful as AI can be used to create an even more extreme version of what we see today - inequality. Where we currently have 8.1 % of the global population, owning 84.6 % of global wealth, AI will only facilitate the movement of power and finances to the wealthy to create a greater wealth gap. The subversion of the weaker majority to serve the stronger minority which has been present in much of mankind's history will only continue under a capitalist framework.

For many the prospect of the dangerous AI is distant vision, as the technological advancements enjoyed in the west are not the preserve of much of the world's population. In the Muslim world, technological advancement is much needed in every sphere of life from modern conveniences to industry and agriculture. The lack of this kind of progress is one of the reasons we struggle to compete with the wider world even though Muslim lands hold much of the resources necessary to build such equipment.

Islam and the Muslim world has a rich heritage of scientific and technological advancement. As Islam views much of this area of development as a *mubah* (permissible) issue, we are free to use and develop such technologies, using them for our advancement and progress. Instead of this issue being a nightmare waiting to happen, the Islamic framework prevents many of the issues capitalism creates. Rather than the focus purely being on the creation of wealth, the Islamic system perspective is rooted in the view that the economy functions to meet the needs of society as a whole. The key aspect of serving the whole of society requires the wealth to flow through the public by creating a system which enforces the distribution of wealth. Measures such as prevention of hoarding and only taxing the wealth of individuals not their income.

The endless positive applications for AI means that it would also be the duty of the Khilafah (Caliphate) to develop policy as well as funding for the useful application of such technologies such as for agriculture, industry and health. Archaic agricultural practices are still being used in our lands whilst foreign investors are invited to cultivate the same land using the latest in machinery. Such long-term funding would enable the future scientists to solve many of the problems faced in these fields as well as expand on scientific discoveries.

Instead of AI being a problematic prospect the Islamic framework ensures this new science serves to enhance life not to compromise it.

**Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by
Zaynab Ismail**