

Daily Editorial Analysis 11 February 2026

February 11, 2026 • vajiramandravi.com



The Approaching AI Surge, Its Global Consequences

Context

- The contemporary world is experiencing a profound shift driven by **Artificial Intelligence**, a development comparable to the **Industrial Revolution** in its potential to reshape society.
- Rather than a gradual change, the moment resembles a structural **rupture** in which technological progress is transforming governance, economies, and security simultaneously.
- Advanced **Large Language Models** now perform reasoning, writing, and analysis, signalling a movement toward machine participation in intellectual activity.
- The central challenge is not merely adaptation to innovation but preserving human authority over increasingly capable systems.

AI as a General-Purpose Technological Revolution

- AI operates as a **general-purpose technology**, influencing nearly every sector of human activity.
- It reshapes communication, decision-making, and institutional functioning by processing vast amounts of **data** and generating predictive insights.

- Governments and courts, designed for gradual evolution, struggle to keep pace with **exponential** technological advancement.
- The replication of speech, vision, and reasoning blurs the boundary between human cognition and machine capability.
- AI systems increasingly influence administration, economic transactions, and knowledge production.
- As institutions attempt adjustment, a widening gap emerges between technological capability and regulatory readiness, raising concerns about accountability and reliability.

AI and the Transformation of Global Politics

- In the twenty-first century, **geopolitics** is being redefined by technological capacity rather than territorial control.
- Global competition, particularly between the **United States** and **China**, now centres on AI leadership, advanced **algorithms**, and control over information networks.
- Nations seek technological sovereignty by building domestic infrastructures, often described as **sovereign stacks**, to avoid dependence.
- AI has become a tool of diplomacy, intelligence, and economic influence. Access to information, computing power, and networked systems determines strategic influence.
- States capable of mastering AI may shape international standards and economic flows, while others risk strategic vulnerability and technological dependence.

AI and the Revolution in Warfare

• Transformation in Military Affairs

- AI is shifting conflict from human-operated systems toward automated and **autonomous**
- **Unmanned** vehicles, intelligent surveillance, and **cyber weapons** are redefining battlefield operations.
- Military strategies now incorporate automated targeting, predictive analysis, and machine-assisted command structures.

• Rise of Asymmetric Warfare

- AI dramatically alters power relationships by enabling **asymmetric warfare**. Smaller forces equipped with intelligent systems can challenge conventional armies.
- Recent conflicts illustrate how drones and automated targeting can undermine traditional military superiority.
- Power is no longer determined solely by heavy weaponry but by access to software, sensors, and real-time analytics.

• Autonomous Weapons and Ethical Concerns

- The emergence of **autonomous weapons** introduces serious ethical dilemmas. When machines independently select targets, questions of accountability arise.
- Without human judgement, established legal and moral frameworks governing conflict may weaken.
- The possibility of algorithm-driven combat challenges traditional concepts of responsibility and control.

AI Beyond the Battlefield and The Existential Risk

• AI Beyond the Battlefield: Social and Institutional Impact

- Beyond military use, AI influences **surveillance**, finance, health care, and governance. Rapid **automation** enhances efficiency but also introduces systemic risks.
- Courts and administrative bodies face challenges when machine-generated outputs contain inaccuracies or fabricated information.
- Institutions evolve gradually, whereas technological capability expands rapidly. This mismatch threatens the stability of legal and administrative systems.
- Societies must adapt governance structures to maintain trust and prevent misuse of automated decision-making.

• The Existential Risk: Loss of Human Control

- A deeper concern emerges with the possibility of **autonomy** exceeding human oversight.
- Advanced systems capable of self-learning may act unpredictably, especially in areas such as **cybersecurity** and information management.
- The concentration of power within complex machine networks creates the risk of unintended consequences.
- Potential scenarios include coordinated drone swarms, automated attacks, or manipulation of public perception through large-scale **predictive analysis**.
- Such developments would shift technology from a tool of assistance to an independent operational force, challenging human agency and ethical responsibility.

The Path Forward: Need for Global Governance and Oversight

- Despite the risks, AI also offers benefits in crisis management, medical research, and conflict prevention.
- Effective **regulation** therefore becomes essential. International cooperation, ethical frameworks, and coordinated **governance** structures must guide development.
- Scientists, policymakers, and institutions must establish safeguards and shared standards.
- Balanced oversight can ensure that technological progress enhances welfare while preventing destabilising outcomes.

Conclusion

- Artificial intelligence is becoming the defining force of the modern era. It is reshaping political power, military capability, and social organisation.

- The future will depend on the ability of societies to integrate innovation responsibly.
- Proper **oversight** and cooperative frameworks can transform AI into a stabilising influence, while neglect could undermine global stability.
- The essential task is to ensure that technological progress remains aligned with human values and collective security.

The Approaching AI Surge, Its Global Consequences FAQs

Q1. What makes Artificial Intelligence a civilisational turning point?

Ans. Artificial Intelligence is a civilisational turning point because it affects nearly every sector of society and changes how decisions, knowledge, and power are created and exercised.

Q2. How is AI influencing global politics?

Ans. AI is influencing global politics by making technological capability, data control, and computing power central to national strength and international influence.

Q3. In what way is warfare changing due to AI?

Ans. Warfare is changing as autonomous systems, drones, and cyber tools increasingly perform military tasks that were previously carried out by human soldiers.

Q4. Why do autonomous weapons raise ethical concerns?

Ans. Autonomous weapons raise ethical concerns because machines may make lethal decisions without human judgment, creating uncertainty about responsibility and accountability.

Q5. What is the main solution proposed to manage AI risks?

Ans. The main solution is the creation of international cooperation, regulations, and oversight systems to ensure AI development remains under human control.

Source: **The Hindu**

Fighter Push — Integrating HAL's Experience with Private Enterprise

Context

- An air force's combat effectiveness rests on advanced weapon systems, trained personnel, and a reliable supply chain working in sync.
- The Indian Air Force operates a mixed fleet of Russian, Western, and indigenous fighters, with the Tejas adding to the portfolio.
- Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) handles repair and overhaul for all fighters, making its role critical—but its overloaded order book, government work culture, and delivery/quality concerns have drawn scrutiny, including from the Comptroller and Auditor General of India.
- Against this backdrop, reports that the development contract for five prototypes of the **Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA)** may be awarded to a private player—excluding HAL—aiming to create a second aircraft manufacturer are broadly welcome.

- However, the shift raises serious professional and execution risks that require careful consideration as decisions are finalised, to ensure timelines, quality, and integration with the IAF's operational needs.

The Complexities of Private Participation in Fighter Aircraft Development

• Private Players as First-Time Developers

- One key concern is that the three shortlisted private entities, despite being major industrial players, would effectively be first-time developers of a fighter aircraft.
- The technical and organisational demands of designing, building, and testing a fifth-generation fighter prototype are far greater than those involved in producing helicopters, ships, or aerospace components.

• Historical Precedent: HAL's Integrated Model

- Historically, India's fighter development followed an integrated, single-agency model. Aircraft like the HF-24 Marut were:
 - Designed by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)'s Aircraft Design Bureau
 - Built, tested, upgraded, and weapon-integrated within the same organisation
 - Supported through series production and lifetime spares by HAL
- Similar end-to-end models applied to trainer aircraft such as the HT-2 and HJT-16.

• Tejas: A Hybrid Development Structure

- The Tejas programme marked a shift to a hybrid model:
 - Design and development led by the Defence Research and Development Organisation's Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA)
 - Series production and lifetime support handled by HAL
- This split already introduced coordination challenges between design and manufacturing.

• Implication for AMCA

- Moving AMCA prototype development entirely to private players represents a further departure from past practice.
- The absence of prior fighter-development experience and the fragmentation of design, testing, production, and long-term support raise questions about execution risk, timelines, and system integration.

Singular Control and Execution Challenges in the AMCA Programme

• Ownership and Accountability Gaps

- In earlier programmes, both Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) functioned under the government, ensuring singular control by the Ministry of Defence.

- In the AMCA model, with ADA as designer and a private firm as executor, questions arise over project ownership, accountability, and authority during prototype testing and eventual production.

• **Infrastructure Concentration in Bengaluru**

- Over eight decades, HAL has built extensive infrastructure—tools, rigs, hangars, and production facilities—centred in Bengaluru.
- The IAF has been deeply embedded in this ecosystem, contributing test aircrew and operational feedback through its Aircraft and Systems Testing Establishment, co-located with HAL.
- For Tejas, a dedicated National Flight Test Centre was created at ADA, alongside nearby DRDO labs specialising in avionics and electronic warfare—all within a tight geographic cluster.
- Replicating this ecosystem elsewhere would require huge capital, land acquisition, and time, raising doubts about feasibility for a private AMCA developer.

• **Design-Manufacturing Integration Risks**

- Aircraft development globally relies on close fusion between designers and production engineers—from design boards to flight testing and upgrades.
- As prototypes fly, manufacturing lines are simultaneously readied so production can begin immediately after certification.
- Expecting a private entity to simultaneously test prototypes and build a **fifth-generation manufacturing ecosystem**—without an assured production order and with a contract limited to five prototypes—poses significant financial and execution risks.

• **Test Aircrew Bottlenecks**

- Testing a futuristic fighter requires highly trained test pilots and engineers. India has only one test pilots school, with limited throughput.
- A private AMCA developer would need multiple trained test aircrew from the outset, creating a critical bottleneck in manpower.

• **A Pragmatic National Approach**

- Given that ADA, the National Flight Test Centre, and IAF test units are all based at HAL Airport, Bengaluru, it would be logical for a private AMCA developer to co-locate within this ecosystem.
- An out-of-the-box proposal is to co-opt parts of HAL's public-funded real estate and facilities—including hangars and testing infrastructure—for the private entity.

The Issue of Location: Where AMCA Should Be Built

- For a strategic programme like the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA), the location of the production facility is critical.
- Past decisions—such as placing the C-295 aircraft factory in Vadodara, Gujarat, close to international borders—should not be repeated for frontline combat aircraft.

- AMCA production should be located deep in the hinterland, with strong connectivity and proximity to HAL's Bengaluru airfield, India's aviation hub.
- Co-location would enhance security, testing efficiency, infrastructure sharing, and coordination with existing design, flight-test, and manufacturing ecosystems essential for a fifth-generation fighter programme.

Fighter Push — Integrating HAL's Experience with Private Enterprise FAQs

Q1. Why is AMCA development significant for India's air power?

Ans. AMCA is critical for India's future air combat capability, ensuring technological parity, strategic autonomy, and sustained operational punch for the Indian Air Force in a contested regional environment.

Q2. Why does private participation in AMCA raise concerns?

Ans. Private firms, though capable industrially, lack experience in developing fighter aircraft, making fifth-generation design, testing, integration, and certification a high-risk and complex undertaking.

Q3. How does HAL's historical role shape the AMCA debate?

Ans. HAL's integrated design-to-production experience in programmes like Marut and Tejas underscores the importance of unified control, mature infrastructure, and long-term lifecycle support.

Q4. Why is Bengaluru central to AMCA's execution strategy?

Ans. Bengaluru hosts HAL, ADA, IAF test units, and DRDO labs, enabling close design-testing-manufacturing integration that would be costly and time-consuming to replicate elsewhere.

Q5. What location strategy is recommended for AMCA production?

Ans. AMCA production should be located in India's hinterland near Bengaluru, enhancing security, infrastructure sharing, flight testing efficiency, and coordination for a frontline combat aircraft programme.

Source: **TH**

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/daily-editorial-analysis-11-february-2026/>

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