



HARVARD Kennedy School  
**BELFER CENTER**  
for Science and International Affairs



**HARVARD**  
John A. Paulson  
School of Engineering  
and Applied Sciences

## **Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs and John A. Paulson School of Engineering and Applied Sciences**

### **Call for Grant Applications for the Faculty Research Fund on the Intersection of Technology and Geopolitics**

**For information and to apply:** <https://www.belfercenter.org/faculty-research-fund-intersection-technology-and-geopolitics>.

Science and technology have long played a role in international affairs, be it in driving the race to explore space, the development of nuclear weapons and efforts to contain them, or the contest over the most valuable natural resources of a given era. But technology's rise as a geopolitical force in the past decade has been dramatic all the same. It is now at the center of conversations about the contours of the emerging international order, including the competition between the United States and China and the rise of influential voices across the Global South. Technology is shaping prospects for reaching global climate goals and defining new realms of challenges and opportunities for democracies and autocracies alike. Emerging technologies, including but not limited to AI, hold enormous potential to propel progress on societal challenges.

To maximize this potential while mitigating risks, though, new forms of governance are required in an era when current international governance is inadequate to existing challenges, much less those over the horizon. The reality that private firms and other non-governmental actors, as well as governments, play central roles in this field makes the potential benefits of technology all the more vast, but the task of governance all the more complex. Indeed, not only do policy choices and outcomes affect the advance and applications of technology, but technological developments themselves both shape the terrain for policy debates at the national and international levels and provide new tools to identify and execute policy. An understanding of technological trends and their possible impacts on geopolitics—and vice versa—is critical. Given the rapid dispersion and potential power of scientific advances, this set of issues is critical to the future of humanity.

Universities have a special role to play in understanding the complexities and offering ideas to shape this coming era, where technology and geopolitics are interwoven to an unprecedented extent. As a home for work on science and international affairs, and as a space where academics and practitioners collaborate, the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at the Harvard Kennedy School (Belfer Center) has a core interest in supporting the work of faculty and others who would like to devote more of their efforts to this intersection. The Harvard John

A. Paulson School of Engineering and Applied Sciences (SEAS) is a place where science and engineering converge, and where new technologies are developed, studied, and assessed for their potential impact. Together, the two entities are able to bring unparalleled expertise to explore technologies as they emerge and their policy impact.

For this reason, the Belfer Center and SEAS are together calling for applications from Harvard faculty across the University proposing work at the intersection of technology and geopolitics. The Belfer Center and SEAS are interested in research that addresses this intersection in both directions: how national and international developments and policy debates affect technologies with geopolitical implications, and how technological advances shape policy debates and the geopolitical landscape. Projects with both analytical and prescriptive elements are welcome. Research teams will ideally have a deep grounding in both science and technology, on the one hand, and public policy and international affairs, on the other.

Grants will be administered, selected, and funded by a committee comprising members from the Belfer Center and SEAS. Grant recipients will be expected to participate in an occasional internal workshop on Technology and Geopolitics, bringing together other grant recipients, pre- and post-doctoral fellows in this space, students, and other interested members of the community. Recipients will also be invited to participate in Belfer Center and SEAS initiatives more broadly in an effort to encourage the long-term flourishing of a community devoted to research and practice on these vital themes.

The specifics of this call for grant applications are:

- **Areas of interest:** The grant committee will consider a wide range of issues to be in the scope of “the intersection of technology and geopolitics.” Areas of interest include, but are not limited to:
  - the technology competition between the United States and China;
  - the effect of policy tools such as sanctions, tariffs, and export controls on scientific advance, and the effect of technological developments on the use of such policy tools;
  - international governance of AI, biotechnology, robotics, and other emerging technologies, including the implications of emerging technologies for international governance efforts;
  - the geopolitical implications of clean energy technologies (including those with AI dimensions);
  - governance challenges of climate adaptation and prospective climate intervention, and the impact of advances in these fields on governance debates;
  - implications of emerging technologies for peace and security in specified geographies;
  - cyberwarfare, autonomous weapons, and other military applications of emerging technology, and the potential effects of these applications for geopolitics;
  - the national security implications of bioengineering and biotechnology;
  - science as an area of international contestation and cooperation;
  - implications of the uneven development of and access to technological advances in different countries and regions;

- technological transfers to the developing world.
- **Grant amounts:** Awards will be granted for up to a range of \$100,000-200,000 for a one-year grant. Multi-year commitments of up to three years are possible pending funding sources. Approximately three projects are anticipated to be funded this cycle.
- **Timeline:**
  - **A concept proposal of 500 words is due by December 6, 2024.** This proposal should include:
    - Research question(s) to be explored and articulated connection to salient themes at the intersection of technology and geopolitics
    - Description of research team
    - Description of planned research outputs to be conducted with these funds, with approximate timeline
    - Explanation of how the proposal fits into any larger research project or effort, whether already completed, in progress, or planned
    - Top-line budget including total amount requested and major categories of spending.
  - The committee may engage with interested potential PIs to suggest collaborations and will **invite full applications by December 16, 2024.**
  - **Full proposals must be submitted by January 31, 2025.**
  - **Funding decisions will be announced in February 2025.**
- **Successful applications are likely to include:**
  - Collaboration of more than one faculty member across disciplines, ideally from multiple departments or schools. This research space is inherently interdisciplinary and the grants are biased toward supporting collaboration. Faculty members may also partner with individuals outside of the university, be it with other academics, people in industry, and practitioners.
  - Policy-oriented outputs addressing particular challenges or opportunities associated with the rise of technology in international affairs, and a plan to produce and disseminate these outputs in a manner capable of reaching a large audience. Outputs may include publications/reports; events; public outreach; and courses or trainings, including the training of students, pre-doctoral fellows, and post-doctoral fellows.
  - Outputs that can be conducted and/or branded as part of the Belfer Center and/or SEAS, whether alone or in collaboration with another school or institution.
  - Concrete deliverables across the life of the grant, not only at the end.

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