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The Political Implications of Science and Technology

My theme seems to be too popular and too vague to speak in a respectable academic meeting. There have been a number of famous/classical issues already discussed in related to my theme such as the case of an atomic bomb. But I here try to explore some new aspects of it and to contribute to deepening of our understanding of “Science and Society” in today.

I discuss four issues as examples to explain the political implications of science and technology.

1. **Political dimension of scientific activities**

Against the traditional way of understanding that science (natural science) is totally independent of political engagement a new wave of science of philosophy says that scientific activities are “political” because they commit continuously and implicitly to remake the world including human relations. This argument has relativized not only the separation of pure science and its application, but also the traditional dichotomy of Naturwissenschaft/Geisteswissenschaft and of science/interpretation.

2. **Displacement of power through ICT (Information and communication technology)**

The organizational power of the central government has been diffused toward global market (mainly financial market) through ICT. As visualized in Asian financial crisis of 1997/8 a huge network of financial market can easily nullify a state power without any military intervention. The concept of power represented by military capabilities has to be revised.

3. **Digital democracy and e-politics**

ICT provides people with a new method of communication and interaction. The new political circumstances can bring about new style of political mobilization well as strong participation. ICT can also make direct democracy in a big state possible. As the same we can organize a virtual cyberspace democracy against a democracy in real world. In any way the political impact of the new method of communication can be ambivalent.

4. **RMA (Revolution in military affairs) and a new perception of a war**

The revolution in conventional forces in 1990s has materialized a pinpoint bombing and a new kind of asymmetrical warfare. This situation can make a war free from mass destruction of human beings of both sides respectively. Politician can now mobilize a military action to achieve some political result without great risk. As a war seems to become less brutal and far from reality of everyday life, democracy can co-exist with a war without difficulties, especially if a war will aim at removing a threat to human right etc. Science and technology have provided us with a new combination of a war and democracy.