



WAR GAMES

WAR HAS ALWAYS BROUGHT ABOUT INNOVATION. NOW PLAYING AT WAR IS DOING IT TOO

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"In Italy for 30 years under the Borgias, they had warfare, terror, murder and bloodshed, but they produced Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci and the Renaissance. In Switzerland, they had brotherly love, they had 500 years of democracy and peace, and what did that produce? The cuckoo clock."

Orson Welles' famous quote from the movie *The Third Man* embodies a fairly deep concept – conflict causes people and countries to innovate. Radar, penicillin, the flu vaccine and numerous other inventions might only have come about because of war. Indeed, GPS was an invention of the US military, one that has brought about a sea change in the geospatial industry over the past 30+ years.

You could hardly get further away from war than playing games. Yet gaming has had a similar effect – the need to produce high resolution images at speed so that people can play faster, more realistic-looking games has resulted in numerous innovations that

have transformed our lives. Now defence and gaming technologies are coming together with a third transformative technology to change the world again: geospatial information. The military needs highly accurate, up-to-date models of the Earth for simulations that use gaming technology to train personnel how to fight.

But as Pete Morrison points out on page 38, surveyors shouldn't rest on their laurels here – the military is going to be streaking ahead of the industry soon, as its needs are so complex. Capturing data with a UAV and GNSS may give us high resolution images georeferenced to perhaps even 1 or 2cm. But can it spot a landmine underneath vegetation or map the inside of a building that a special forces team must capture?

Eventually, the innovations the military needs will trickle back down to the civilian population. I wonder which of them will transform the geospatial industry next?



WELCOME TO THE CHATTERSPHERE

THE RECENT GOVERNMENT WHITE PAPER ON AI REGULATION DOES LITTLE TO CALM NERVES AS THE FURORE OVER ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND CHATBOTS GAINS PACE

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'We are concerned by feedback from across industry that the absence of cross-cutting AI regulation creates uncertainty and inconsistency which can undermine business and consumer confidence in AI, and stifle innovation.' So says the government's recent White Paper on AI which goes on to propose a regulatory framework for the AI landscape.¹

And just as Seppe Cassettari voices a warning on page 51 of this issue, so the Adam Smith Institute is yet to be convinced of measures intended to make Britain an 'AI Superpower'. While broadly welcoming the White Paper, it urges caution. "We shouldn't be risking inventing a nuclear blast before we've learnt how to keep it in the shell. We must make sure AI is used safely and responsibly

to bring about a better world - not thinking of safety as an afterthought," argues Connor Axiotes, the Institute's Research Lead on Resilience, Risk, and State Capacity.

Chatbot algorithms are already so complex that their creators want to hide that complexity so that users can interact with them as easily as performing a Google search. The risks of disinformation and misinformation are evident, hence the drive for regulation. The danger is that AI rules being proposed in Britain, the EU and elsewhere may simply not be ready or sufficiently robust to help users decide between what's real or not, and what's good or bad.

1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ai-regulation-a-pro-innovation-approach>

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