

Web 3.0: A World of Metaverse

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Introduction

The latest wave of technological revolution is being geared by the Metaverse phenomena. Being more connected and ever-present is the key selling point of this new concept, which also brings several controversies and issues with it. The metaverse is a virtual environment where people will be able to communicate and interact through and among personalized virtual avatars, which would surely make people feel more present than just a video call or multiplayer video games.² Despite its increasingly ubiquitous presence and influence, the term “metaverse” still generates a generous amount of confusion.

New World Order

The threats we are experiencing today can still exist in the meta-universe while novel threats that don't really exist in the present might come into sight. What we can do is to at least envisage the potential changes in the world order.

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² Vishnoi, S. (2021, December 19). *How the Metaverse Will Redefine Politics and Governments*. TheQuint.

China will try to undergo a series of measures to use political power to control the up-and-coming Metaverse, from which they cannot stay immune. The “East and the West” are quite possibly heading towards a conflict that does not necessarily have to engage militaries.³ A new type of war may emerge that would be distinctive from the concept of classical wars and cold-wars we had come across before. In this respect, the East knows better about the West than the other way round. And the Metaverse will know us all.



Election campaigns

From Barack Obama in 2009 to Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2012 and 2014, social media and the latest technologies have been incorporated in election campaigns before. With the metaverse in sight, they can be more inclined with the electoral process. Namely, the Joe Biden-Kamala Harris campaign initiated a campaign through an in-game map in Fortnite (A popular multiplayer video game) where the campaign’s message of ‘Build Back Better with Biden’ was put at the forefront.⁴ To be more connected and reachable towards the young audience, politicians are going with a trial and error approach using the newest technologies like AI videos, video games, and streaming services. Political campaigns across the world may see drastic changes with metaverse, where social media popularity can become the threshold for a politician to get votes.

³ Elgan, M. (2022, February 7). *Will the Metaverse Usher in a Universe of Security Challenges?* Security Intelligence.

<https://securityintelligence.com/articles/metaverse-security-challenges/>

⁴ *Wars of the three spheres: the West, the East and the Metaverse.* (2022, January 14). Real Instituto Elcano.

<https://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/en/wars-of-the-three-spheres-the-west-the-east-and-the-metaverse/>

The Future Of War with Metaverse

Virtual War ground

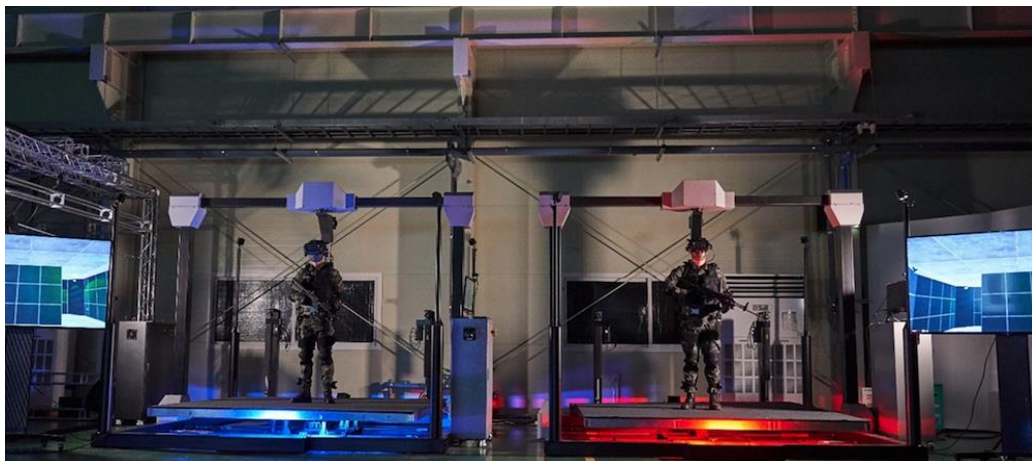
With the metaverse aspiring to utilize everything at its disposal, the concept can someday make conventional warfare obsolete. The world is continuing to advance in terms of technology and the benefits of adding a layer of virtual reality on top of physical warfare are becoming more evident. Along with technological advancement, traditional wars can be outdated eventually but that does not mean they will become less harmful in any way. Although this new form of combat will add a layer of safety for the soldiers, there is more to lose at a war than experiencing physical harm.

In traditional wars, nations go to war over something tangible and valuable to them. Play-to-earn games will have economic value in the Metaverse as they did in the real world. Real Battles taking place at a virtual battleground may sound like something straight from a sci-fi film, but, apparently, it is not too far-fetched. Implementing virtual battlegrounds as a replacement for real-life ones is not without negative consequences. This might have a profound impact on the global political structure and how actors interact, and a nation's stature would no longer depend on its resources and manpower. Today's professional online gamers may also become tomorrow's soldiers on the virtual battlefield.

Military research: Training & Capacity Building

To get more into the concept of metaverse converging with military training and capacity building, there are two arguments that are worth noting. The first one is organizational; whether the process of military research and analytical tools can be misused. The second is arguably technological; as we have seen in many wargames, most of the technological tools that are being used today are designed without analytic or mental safety goals in mind.

I. Artificial Military Training (i.e SIMNET)



Increased funding in government-funded laboratories (i.e DARPA- Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency) for the past few decades has been facilitating hardware developments equipped with 3D graphics, simulation, and virtual reality. One of the revolutionary projects of DARPA-funded U.S. Army's creation is the SIMNET military

program (SIMulator Distributed NETworking), the first-ever example of the futuristic concept of the metaverse. It includes an extensive batch of simulators to conduct collective team training and run pre-mission rehearsals, with a dose of virtual architecture to provide a synthetic training exercise to their soldiers. This program has transformed the fundamental approach to military training. SIMNET being the pioneer of merging the real and virtual worlds in military research and training, has opened a wide opportunity for a defense metaverse.

II. A whole new concept of defense metaverse

A defense metaverse, if properly structured to foster interactions across the military, can reap immense warfighting rewards. As we talked about the metaverse in military training and research, the concept of a defense metaverse would not be too far-fetched. A defense metaverse should offer reusability of technology, lesser acquisition cost because theoretically the training and simulation equipment can be reused for testing, evaluation, experimentation, or even education. It is also possible that a defense metaverse can provide an alternative way to pick future military leaders suited to the future fight; from the multiplayer simulation war games. Since *America's Army*⁵ was launched in 2002, the military has been using video games alongside traditional tools, so it is nowhere near an entirely new concept.



Implications of the Metaverse for National Security

Terrorism and Militancy

While we are talking about armed forces embracing the newer technology offered by the metaverse, we should not be assuming that the terrorists and militants are not considering this as well. If we think about it, virtualizing their training, operations, capacity building, and also recruiting would be much more efficient and impactful inside the walls of the metaverse. Just like the US is adopting the virtual approach in their law enforcement scrutiny, terrorists can also merge their missions into the metaverse which would make the entire cost, risk, and threat of exposing themselves under control. We have had proof of them already using the

⁵ Korenko, M. (2022, March 3). *Metaverse & War: What's the connection?* - DataDrivenInvestor. Medium.

latest technologies at their disposal like the *recruitment and training game "Special Forces 2" by Hezbollah that was based on "America's Army", a U.S. government platform.*⁶

I. Recruitment and Training

Radical terrorist groups have always been nothing but creative with their recruitment and training procedures. They have managed to conduct many successful operations with discretion only because they always looked for using the latest possible technology. In July 2007, a terrorist group attacked the *Australian Broadcasting Corporation HQ. They managed to cause financial damage and civilian deaths with their virtual facility residing on a game named 'Second Life'.*

With the emergence of the metaverse, it can bring out the possibilities for these groups to create secluded cells and communities to proceed with their agenda. They can undergo their recruitment process without being at risk of exposure. They can conduct training and capacity building for their 'Soldiers' and not to mention the possibilities of virtual attacks (i.e cyber attacks) are still there.

II. Virtual Militancy Outfits

Although the existing military outfits are very discrete in their operations already, a complete virtual universe (i.e metaverse) can facilitate their process to be even more discrete and out of reach for the law Enforcement Agencies.

A "*Data Mining Report*" was published by the U.S. Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI). Among many, the "*Reynard Project*" was specifically dedicated to the understanding of online games and their implications for the Intelligence Community. After a researcher from Pentagon demonstrated how the game named *World of Warcraft* can be used to plan an attack on the White House⁷, the focus of the project shifted to leveraging the practical experience and understanding the behaviors of the multiplayer video games.

Fake News & Disinformation

Since the inception of the web: 2.0, we have been dealing with the phenomenon of Fake News & Disinformation constantly. This has been in the frame for a very long time and with the metaverse, the condition can only worsen. In the metaverse, our minds will be colonized

⁶ Sheng, A. (2022, February 25). *Can we step out of the metaverse long enough to achieve peace in the real world?* South China Morning Post. <https://www.scmp.com/comment/opinion/article/3168367/can-we-step-out-metaverse-long-enough-achieve-peace-real-world>

⁷ Shachtman, N. (2010, August 25). *Insiders Doubt 2008 Pentagon Hack Was Foreign Spy Attack (Updated)*. Wired. [https://www.wired.com/2010/08/insiders-doubt-2008-pentagon-hack-was-foreign-spy-attack/#:~:text=4%3A02%20PM-,Insiders%20Doubt%202008%20Pentagon%20Hack%20Was%20Foreign%20Spy%20Attack%20\(Updated,and%20other%20removable%20storage%20media.](https://www.wired.com/2010/08/insiders-doubt-2008-pentagon-hack-was-foreign-spy-attack/#:~:text=4%3A02%20PM-,Insiders%20Doubt%202008%20Pentagon%20Hack%20Was%20Foreign%20Spy%20Attack%20(Updated,and%20other%20removable%20storage%20media.)

by whatever virtual information we receive, whether real or fake. The core design of the metaverse is more inclined towards feeding the information that we want, rather than the ones we need.

Considering a good amount of misinformation and fake news can come up during private interactions in the metaverse, deep fake and similar technologies can only fuel the fire. Though the reality of the metaverse concept still exists in theory, virtual reality and gaming experiences offer a window to understanding what kind of problems can occur there. In this current technology-based world, digital companies have been siphoning personal information and then storing, manipulating, and repackaging that data to sell access to a targeted demographic of their user-base. But a persistent pseudo-world offered by the metaverse will provide them with a massive amount of data that will further progress the opportunity to monetize that data. Another plan of Facebook includes increasing the sale of virtual goods, which will more likely depend on advertising, hence further collection and exploitation of personal data.

What can be done to strategize with the Metaverse concept

Metaverse is emerging; eventually, we all will have to deal with this news phenomenon just like we did with other technological advancements in the past. But, there should be some planning and strategies to be made for tackling the up-and-coming challenges that the metaverse can offer. Previously we have seen widely unsuccessful digital policies because these technical rules often fail to address the behavioral effects of technology. Policymakers should focus on the underlying problems that the digital revolution can create so that they don't become outdated when something new emerges again. As the new metaverse will be constructed upon the already existing virtual reality, any policy effort related to metaverse must come into action depending on what exists now.

Governments and state-level officials have to consider risks and opportunities that may come with the emerging immersive technologies. This also requires taking the possibilities presented by the metaverse seriously. (i.e *Singapore PM office has formed a Centre for Strategic future Group to manage a fast-changing complex environment*). On similar lines, a dedicated department of technology should represent private sectors, academia, and government. (i.e *The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has established a virtual ministry of possibilities to bring the government systems to speed*)⁸

Bangladesh should specifically invest and seek cooperation in the defense ground so that we can incorporate our military to the virtual sphere presented by metaverse. Also, any initiative to digitalization will only facilitate the path towards the Digital Bangladesh concept. Existing laws and policies (i.e ICT Act-2009, Digital Security Act-2017) has been under the microscope for a long time. All we can do is to mold them into such a form that can easily fit into the new phenomenon of Metaverse.

⁸ <https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/the-uae-government/ministry-of-possibilities>

Conclusion

It is quite comforting that Facebook is discussing behavioral standards for their newest technology, but it is far from sufficient. The shiny new concept of metaverse and its glittery opportunities must not make us forget that we still have challenges that are yet to be resolved- these problems will simply metastasize into the metaverse if they are left forsaken.