

Leveraging Generative AI for Design and Prototyping in American Defense Manufacturing: Innovations and Benefits

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1. Introduction

American defense manufacturing is an industry that designs and builds many different types of products. Traditional analysis-and-prototyping methods in this industry can take weeks or even years, depending on the complexity of the products and requirements. Professional engineers who work in the industry usually have decades of experience and expertise, and even with that experience and expertise, it is not uncommon for efforts going into the development of some extremely complex products to not be successful. The introduction and adoption of generative AI large language models (LLMs), such as ChatGPT and others, hold great promise and potential benefits for American defense manufacturing that go far beyond news headlines and dreamy narratives.

Generative AI large language models, a revolutionary innovation in artificial intelligence, provide both technical and ethical disruptions to design and prototyping processes in American defense manufacturing. Technical innovations include many sophisticated AI algorithms and methods such as machine learning, neural networks, deep learning, reinforcement learning, natural language processing, text-to-image translation, image generation and analysis, music generation and analysis, and multi-modality. In these dimensions, generative AI is transforming what machines can do, extending product capabilities and facilitating human-computer interactions. Ethical benefits include protecting privacy and sensitive information, generating unbiased content and prototypes, and relying on machines for creative workflow and questionable design elements [1] ; [2].

1.1. Background and Significance

The American defense manufacturing workforce stands on the brink of a paradigm shift. Commercial capabilities in generative artificial intelligence (AI) have reached a popular manifestation like ChatGPT. Behind the scenes, corporations and start-ups innovate advanced

“foundational models” specializing in computer vision, molecule generation, chatbot assistants, and text generation [3]. Variants of foundational models are being embedded into commercial software applications used within defense. These endeavors reshape work processes, interpersonal communications, and creative solutions. Adoption wonders paired with hesitations, such as bias, integrity, privacy, and security concerns, abound. Some ask whether AI is merely a tool to enhance human skills or whether its unmistakable intelligence renders humans irrelevant. AI might transform what it means to be human. Designing and prototyping these transformative interactions raise additional issues related to social and cognitive constructiveness, desirability, and ethical considerations.

Generative AI will recast the defense workforce; accordingly, it is imperative to understand how to leverage it creatively and socially constructively for the design and prototyping of defense systems. Generative AI applications are commodity software, the design policies and data of which are often inscrutable. Their importation scarcely equals their integration into enterprises. Generative AI applications change the nature of the creative and sense-making tasks of design professionals. These effects must be foregrounded to develop approaches for their social and constructiveness integration into work processes. Broad maturity assessments and indicia of generative AI activity are necessary to help focus, rate progress, and share practices. The words “workforce” and “professionals” encompass all sectors of workers and specialists who participate in human-machine interaction.

1.2. Research Aim and Objectives

In recent years, artificial intelligence (AI) has garnered a lot of attention and discussion worldwide. Over the past few months, generative AI (GenAI) has prominently taken the spotlight due to its ability to imitate human-like creativity, potentially transforming businesses and economies. This has raised many concerns and questions about the state of the world and occupations in the future. Generative AI models excel in their ability to recognize patterns in existing data and generate new content. Several recent advances using these models have motivated applications of GenAI tools to professional practice across industries, including those that have been historically slow to adopt new technologies [4]. Product design is one such industry. This industry is a unique “thread” that weaves through and connects myriad industries, and it is a rapidly growing sector that employs significant portions of the global workforce. Though there is a long history of attempts to design products using

computers, product designers overwhelmingly still rely on traditional approaches to design. However, hopes abound that the advent of GenAI tools might transform product design practice.

There are many barriers currently limiting the practical application of GenAI tools for real-world use in industry settings. Some of these barriers pertain to specific constraints, working practices, and industry contexts that characterize the product design process. Others are more broadly ethical and regulatory concerns that are shared amongst multiple industries. Within this essay, the barriers to the adoption of GenAI tools in product design are articulated and situated within two conceptual phases of the product design process: design ideation and design development. A comprehensive research agenda to stimulate discussions around opportunities for realizing the full potential of GenAI tools in the product design domain is also proposed.

2. Fundamentals of Generative AI

Generative AI is a subfield of artificial intelligence that focuses on creating models that can generate new content or outputs based on learned patterns and representations from existing data. Generative AI is a type of artificial intelligence (AI) that is capable of generating new content, ideas, or solutions by learning from existing information. It involves the use of algorithms and models that analyze and understand data patterns to create novel outputs. Generative AI models can produce a wide range of outputs, including images, text, music, designs, and more.

At its core, generative AI operates by training a model using a dataset that represents a specific domain or style. During training, the model learns the underlying patterns, structures, and relationships present in the data. Once trained, the model can then generate new content that resembles the training data but is not an exact replica [5]. Generative AI encompasses various techniques and approaches, including generative adversarial networks (GANs), variational autoencoders (VAEs), and autoregressive models such as recurrent neural networks (RNNs) and transformers.

GANs use two neural networks, a generator, and a discriminator, that compete against each other. The generator creates new content, while the discriminator evaluates the quality of the generated content. Through this adversarial process, the generator improves its ability to

create realistic outputs [1]. VAEs are probabilistic models that encode input data into a lower-dimensional latent space and then decode it back to reconstruct the content. By sampling from the latent space, new content can be generated. Autoregressive models generate content sequentially, predicting each element based on previous elements.

Generative AI has numerous applications across different fields. In visual arts, it can be used to create artwork or assist artists in their creative process. In design, generative AI can generate architectural layouts, product designs, or fashion concepts. In gaming, it can create immersive environments or procedurally generated levels. In healthcare, generative AI can assist in drug discovery or generate synthetic medical data for research purposes.

2.1. Definition and Overview

Generative AI is a subset of AI technologies and algorithms that can create new content, models, strategies, or solutions derived from existing and provided material, input, process, or observations [6]. Generative AI systems can ingest and analyze massive amounts of data, identify patterns, and use them to produce entirely new content that is similar, with variances, or in some other way connected to the input data. It may include producing text, imagery, code, 3D models, music, or other content types. Generative AI systems range in complexity, output types, and versatility from those built using parametric or algorithmic design, such as CAD systems and LEGO design models, to more advanced deep learning models, such as Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) and transformer architecture models like GPT-3 or DALL-E 2 [5]. This section provides a precise definition of generative AI and its functionality on a high level.

While generative AI encompasses a range of technologies, terms, and systems, there are some common functional components, creative workflows, and assumptions. At the highest level, generative AI generally follows a “black box” workflow. By providing generative AI systems content in various formats (text prompts, example images, or sketches) with directions on how to process the data, an output is generated. Depending on the system type, this output could be multiple or a single content piece adjusted according to the provided instructions.

2.2. Key Concepts and Techniques

Fundamental to the functioning of generative AI are two mechanisms: Generative Pre-trained Transformer (GPT) and DALL-E, respectively tasked with text generation and translation of

text prompts into corresponding visual images. For a prompt on an intended object, GPT generates its textual description by recycling features of the object that are contextually relevant [7]. DALL·E uses the textual description from GPT to generate visual images of the intended object by aggregating features of the object based on its textual description. The basis of generative AI is the concept of pre-training. GPT or DALL-E is 'generative' because the Transformer structure includes an encoder and decoder that are trained jointly as an end-to-end model. The encoder receives a series of words that constitute the input text and converts them into a continuous representation that encapsulates the meaning of the input text as point locations in a high-dimensional space. The decoder makes use of the output of the encoder to produce an output sequence of words one word at a time. The weight of the Transformer architecture is randomly initialized. As the training progresses, the model learns to store information about language in its parameters. The training objective is to predict the next word in a sequence given its previous words. This is done on a large corpus of text. Given the prompt with one word, GPT activates contextually relevant features of that one word stored in the vicinity of that one word in the high-dimensional space at its corresponding text embedding. GPT generates words that correspond to the activated features and projects to the output text space, where probabilities are assigned to words in the vocabulary to choose the next word [3]. This process iterates until the stopping criterion is satisfied.

3. Applications of Generative AI in Design and Prototyping

Generative AI refers to a rapidly evolving subfield of artificial intelligence that focuses on creating innovative tools and systems for automating the process of generation in the creative industries. Many tasks performed by humans, such as designing, composing, and writing, are generative in nature [3]. Therefore, software product teams are exploring ways to augment those tasks with generative AI capabilities. In recent years, generative AI models have emerged that can produce photographs, illustrations, graphics, music compositions, and text outputs based on diverse inputs. To facilitate the interaction with generative AI models, dedicated software applications and features are emerging. These tools allow end-users to engage with the model-based creations by providing diverse input contexts. Unlike general-purpose interfaces, such tools have instructions and dedicated interfaces for end-users to provide input context and invoke those prompts.

As generative AI is applied to tasks not auto-generatively handled by dedicated software applications, software product teams will need to work on understanding generative AI models' behavior and crafting input prompts shaping their outputs. This will require creative and innovative processes typically embedded in human-centered design. Other approaches focusing on prototyping of generative AI applications will also support conceptualization, aiding the understanding of generative AI models, prototype prompts, and interface affordances. The application of generative AI in design pertains especially to intensifying, exhibiting, exploring, and expanding the skills of designers in shaping the form of built artifacts [2].

4. Benefits and Challenges of Implementing Generative AI in Defense Manufacturing

Wide adoption of generative artificial intelligence (AI) in American defense manufacturing is expected to revolutionize the entire design and prototyping workflows of systems, components, and machines through new tools for algorithmically creating human-like concepts without any prior knowledge. Systems traditionally requiring thousands of hours will be completed in seconds. Generative AI is a technology that has emerged in the past two years that formulates a two-part model: a creator that applies transformations to an existing digital object and a critic that decides if the transition conforms to a set of rules. There are many benefits anticipated with the integration of generative AI in defense manufacturing.

Embracing the overwhelming productivity benefits from generative AI image creators, there is immediate national defense insurance implication to transform the generative image design and prototyping tool set to one able to create three-dimensional parts for mechanical systems such as those found on manned and unmanned aerial and land vehicles and in control circuitry. The expected outcome from a generative AI assistance toolset is the massively accelerated modeling of systems that can ultimately result in successful test and deployment of air and land vehicles worldwide. New high-fidelity designs can systematically cascade into conventional fluid dynamics modeling of structures traveling through air and water at subsonic and supersonic velocities. Little by little systems that are currently impossible to model conventionally can be transiently tested at higher altitudes at no cost. Consequently, the barriers to entry on the design and prototyping side of national defense applications are lower than they have ever been making every day that passes a critical moment [6].

Leveraging cloud-based and edge computing, the intent is to create a generative model in off-the-shelf programming languages to create and curate a data set to train predominantly European generative AI architecture that can outperform existing generative AI models and democratize access to generative AI tooling to all practitioners. In doing so, panoramas can create a roadmap for the development of generative model architectures to assist the design and prototyping of continual defense use-case scenarios. Panoramas believe that in this generative AI “gold rush,” the current multi-million user base architectural models will become relatively ineffective due to proprietary lock on the training data, lack of modularity, and non-robust inferencing architecture on edge devices [2].

5. Case Studies in American Defense Manufacturing

[6]

Design Exploration and Rapid Concept Iteration: Generative AI-Driven Kit Design

The rapid deployment of autonomous systems, such as aerial drones, can revolutionize military intelligence gathering and surveillance operations. UAVs must be transported in small numbers in confined vehicles, creating opportunities for kit designs that simplify removal and assembly. However, kit designs for complex real-world drone geometries can typically take months, if not years, to develop. Using the generative AI design assistant, a defense contractor assisted an engineer in creating novel and manufacturable kit designs for a complex drone in as little as 2.5 hours. The tool replaced months of iterative design exploration and drawing-intensive detailing with greatly accelerated computer explorations. Starting with no input drawings or digital files, the engineer interacted with the generative AI model using natural language prompts, resulting in over 830 iterations of designs, modeling, and analysis, reduced to only 8 ones that met the design criteria [8].

6. Future Trends and Innovations in Generative AI for Defense Manufacturing

Generative AI is getting more popular around the world and is used in many industries like the media and the military. People often connect generative AI to ChatGPT or DALL E, but it's more than just making text or images with AI. Generative AI gathers, understands, and uses lots of information, like 3D models, programs, chemicals, and protein structures, to make new designs. In simple words, generative AI creates something new based on what it has learned. In the design world, generative AI is used to do a great part of the design job all by

itself. Manufacturers tell AI the aims or needs for the design, and this AI considers everything about the design, like costs, materials, functions, and how it's made [6].

The American defense industry faces many troubles and a growing need for new tools. Everything changes fast these days, so timely upgrades of machines and equipment are very important. Here, generative AI promises a lot; it's expected to restart substantial design tasks. Designers and workers will just tell AI what they want to make, and AI will think of everything else, making lots of designs to pick from [2].

7. Ethical and Security Considerations in AI-Driven Design and Prototyping

A careful review of the integration of AI-driven design and prototyping American defense manufacturing will be of utmost importance to understanding its ethical and security considerations. On the other side of the argument, those critical of generative AI may argue that the deployment of such new technologies within industries plagued with regulatory issues may prove hazardous, while those in favor may find justification in the productive benefits to national security and manufacturing. Establishing the positions of both sides of the debate will create a better picture of the ethical considerations working towards a neutral stasis.

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) has become a topic of expanding interest and concern recently. The promise of so-called "creative machines" is alluring, but the technology raises a number of social, legal, ethical, and security issues. Generative AI automatically generates highly tailored and lifelike sound, video, text, immersive experiences, and other content across a variety of media. In a competitive space, leading organizations and initiatives have emerged recently, including Microsoft's \$10 billion investment in OpenAI, which has fueled rapid expansion of text generation platforms such as ChatGPT and Google's Bard [6]. In defense procurement, the Department of Defense (DoD) is funding efforts to connect generative AI with large datasets to produce weapon systems and other solutions faster, cheaper, and better than traditional means. Concerns for these efforts include infiltrating bias into defense systems, the potential for "hive mind" decisions by AI, inappropriate use of data, and the shutting out of small businesses from offering innovations. Worry on the flip side includes fending off tremendous competition from adversaries like China, and what the economic and jobs picture will look like as the generative AI capabilities improve and become more widely adopted.

Security aims to protect confidentiality, integrity, and availability of systems. Security of Safety-Critical systems is of vital importance in preventing catastrophic consequences. Growing interconnectivity in Safety-Critical systems incorporating AI capabilities can introduce “blind spots,” which OpenAI claims do not include the development of weapons to kill people. Each of these risks can have the same indiscriminatory consequences as other unrefined technologies that have gone into conflict (e.g. Industrial, etc.). The Department of Defense (DoD) and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) are making significant investments and conducting experimentation to determine to what extent generative AI technology should be adopted by government agencies and procurement contractors [2].

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

Leveraging Generative AI for Design and Prototyping in American Defense Manufacturing holds great potential for enhancing defense cuability, cost efficiency and speed of design cycles for new systems. Academic designs and prototypes presented in this paper showed that do-it-yourself tools available over the internet can produce useful results discarded even years old by major aerospace businesses. Involved basic techniques used in designs and prototypes presented. Three immediate recommendations arise from this work, decision tools. The simplest way forward is to embrace generative AI tools available. The pipeline of basic designs presented prototype local production with additional work enables cost-effective production of structures, including aerospace systems, produced from simple designs, [2]. It is also critical to fund and support use of open source modeling and simulation tools capable of finding designs which may be considered “out of the box” or unconventional. Air vehicles produced by design procedure using only mass and mission as inputs and no other design constraints would be very difficult to discover by human designers and are qualitatively different from all space systems developed in the USA in this century. Finally, more sophisticated AD and AI systems leveraging local production capabilities may be envisioned which have yet to be realized or even actively considered in defense today by the USA, NATO or even major aerospace companies as presented. The limits of MASS and constantly advancing 3D printing technology create untapped opportunities for low cost production by anyone capable of operating computer both good and bad [1].

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