Forum: First General Assembly Committee

Issue: The Question of Regulating Military Applications of Artificial Intelligence

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Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a branch of computer science whose goal is to build machines capable of learning, reasoning, problem-solving, perception, and language comprehension. These systems can adapt, make decisions, and generate content such as text or images. [1] AI has transformed many aspects of society, contributing to advancements in healthcare, economic growth, scientific research, and safety. However, it has also raised serious concerns, including job displacement, erosion of human skills and social interaction, ethical bias, environmental costs, and the spread of misinformation. [2]

The military use of AI is expanding rapidly. The global military AI market was valued at approximately USD 9–10 billion in 2024 and is projected to reach between USD 19–35 billion by 2030–2035. [3]Armed forces increasingly rely on AI for intelligence analysis, autonomous operations, logistics, decision support systems, and unmanned platforms such as drones. These technologies allow faster data processing, improved threat detection through Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR), predictive maintenance, and reduced risk to human soldiers in high-risk operations.[4]

Despite these advantages, the integration of AI into military systems raises major ethical, legal, and security challenges. AI can significantly increase the speed and scale of military decision-making, potentially reducing meaningful human involvement, particularly in combat situations involving lethal force. Errors, bias, or misuse of AI systems could result in

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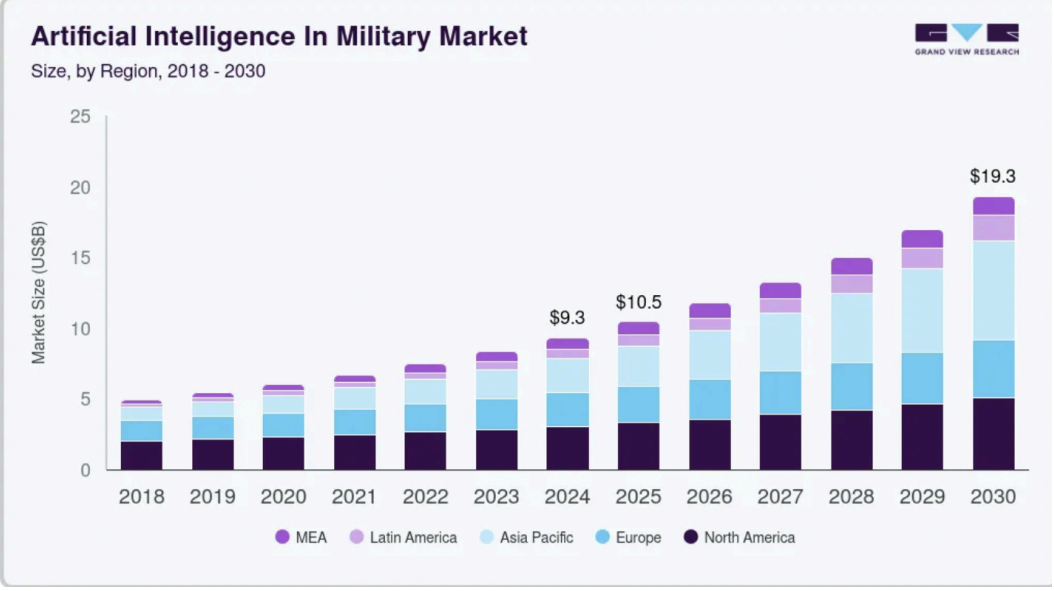
[1] IBM www.ibm.co Accessed December 18, 2025
[2] MDPI www.mdpi.com Accessed December 27, 2025
[3] AI aimagazine.com Accessed December 17, 2025
[4] European Parliament /www.europarl.europa.eu Accessed January 1, 2026

unintended escalation of conflicts. [5]Furthermore, the lack of comprehensive international regulation risks destabilizing the global balance of power and accelerating an AI-driven arms race. As AI moves from civilian to military applications, there is growing urgency to assess the risks of autonomous warfare, prevent destabilizing competition, and ensure effective global regulation and human oversight.[6]



A graph presenting market expenditures on the use of AI in the military[7]

Definition of Key Terms

Artificial Intelligence (AI) [8]

Artificial intelligence refers to computer systems designed to perform tasks that normally require human intelligence, such as learning, decision-making, pattern recognition, and problem-solving.

Military Artificial Intelligence [9]

[5] Oxford Academic academic.oup.com Accessed December 19, 2025
[6] Grand View Research www.grandviewresearch.com Accessed December 27, 2025
[7] Grand View Research www.grandviewresearch.com Accessed December 27, 2025
[8] IBM www.ibm.co Accessed December 18, 2025
[9] United Nations disarmament.unoda.org Accessed December 23, 2025

Military artificial intelligence involves using AI technologies that enhance learning, decision-making, and problem-solving, within military operations. Its primary goal is to enhance efficiency, speed, and accuracy on the battlefield and in supporting roles.

Autonomous Weapons Systems (AWS) [10]

Autonomous weapons systems are military systems that can select and engage targets with limited or no direct human control once activated.

Lethal Autonomous Weapons (LAWs) [11]

Lethal autonomous weapons are a type of autonomous weapons system that are capable of using lethal force without direct human intervention.

Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) [12]

Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) is the coordinated process of gathering, analyzing, and using information to improve situational awareness and support decision-making, primarily in defense and security operations

International Humanitarian Law (IHL) [13]

International humanitarian law is a set of rules which attempt, for humanitarian reasons, to limit the effects of armed conflict. It protects people who are not or are no longer participating in the hostilities and restricts the means and methods of warfare. International humanitarian law is also known as the law of war or the law of armed conflict.

AI arms race[14]

The AI arms race is a competition between nations, primarily the United States and China, and also major tech companies, to develop and deploy the most advanced AI technologies

Background

Artificial intelligence (AI) was first introduced into the military as a tool to support human decision-making rather than replace it. Early uses of AI focused on things like data

[10] Trends Research trendsresearch.org Accessed December 26, 2025
[11]United Nations disarmament.unoda.org Accessed December 23, 2025
[12] ElistAir elistair.com Accessed December 19, 2025
[13] ICRC www.icrc.org Accessed December 29, 2025
[14] CEPA cepa.org Accessed December 18, 2025

analysis, logistics planning, and missile defense systems, where computers helped process information faster but humans still made the final decisions. As technology improved and computing power increased, AI systems became more advanced and began to play a larger role in military operations.

Today, at least 17 countries publicly use AI in their militaries, including the United States, China, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, Israel, India, Japan, South Korea, Germany, Canada, Australia, Turkey, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Brazil [15]. As a result, AI has become an important part of modern warfare. Militaries now rely on automation to increase speed, efficiency, and accuracy, especially in combat situations where decisions must be made very quickly.[16]

AI is currently used in many areas of the military. One major area is autonomous systems, such as AI-powered drones, unmanned ground vehicles, and robotic systems. These are used for surveillance, reconnaissance, and missions in dangerous environments, which helps reduce the risk to soldiers. AI is also heavily used in Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR), where it analyzes huge amounts of data from satellites, drones, and sensors to identify threats, track enemy movement, and give commanders real-time information. In addition, AI plays a role in cyber warfare by helping detect cyberattacks, protect sensitive military systems, and respond to digital threats.[17] AI is also used in logistics, targeting, training simulations, and even battlefield healthcare, including robotic assistance in medical procedures and evacuations.

There is an important difference between defensive and offensive uses of military AI. Defensive systems, such as missile defense and early-warning systems, are mainly designed to protect civilians and infrastructure. Offensive systems, however, can include autonomous weapons that are capable of selecting and engaging targets, which raises serious ethical and legal concerns. As AI systems become more independent and require less human control, especially in combat, questions about responsibility and accountability become more serious.[18]

Recent conflicts have shown how powerful military AI can be. Russia's war in Ukraine has highlighted the use of AI in battlefield surveillance, data analysis, autonomous drones, and cyber operations, making combat faster and more effective. These developments have contributed to a global military AI arms race, as countries realize that having more advanced

[15] QZ qz.com Accessed December 20, 2025
[16] Army University www.armyupress.army.mil Accessed December 20, 2025
[17] European Parliament www.europarl.europa.eu Accessed January 1, 2026
[18] United Nations disarmament.unoda.org Accessed January 3, 2026

AI could give them a major advantage in future conflicts [19] A military AI arms race refers to the competition between states to develop and deploy advanced AI systems, including lethal autonomous weapons.

The United States, China, and Russia are the main countries involved in this competition. The United States aims to maintain its technological advantage by using AI to improve decision-making, efficiency, and overall military effectiveness, especially in response to China's growing influence. China sees AI leadership as essential for military modernization, economic growth, and global power, and is investing heavily to challenge U.S. dominance. [20] Russia, while behind the U.S. and China in AI development, uses AI to make up for economic and manpower limitations by increasing battlefield effectiveness. Together, these countries are driving an intense competition over military AI.

Despite its advantages, the increasing use of AI in warfare raises serious security, ethical, and legal concerns. One major issue is the risk of an AI arms race pushing countries to deploy systems too quickly, without proper testing or regulation. AI may also lower the barrier to conflict, as governments may be more willing to use force when fewer soldiers are put in danger.[21] There is also concern that non-state actors, such as terrorist groups, could gain access to AI technology through open-source tools or illegal markets.

Another key concern is accountability. When AI systems make decisions on their own, it is unclear who should be held responsible if civilians are harmed, the programmer, the military commander, or the state. This makes it harder to enforce International Humanitarian Law (IHL), which is meant to protect civilians and limit unnecessary suffering.[22] Many people also believe there is a moral issue with allowing machines to make life-and-death decisions, as removing human judgment from warfare risks making conflict more dehumanized.

Because of these concerns, global debate over regulating military AI has increased. However, there is still no single international agreement. The United States generally supports flexible rules that allow innovation, while the European Union focuses on a more human-centered, risk-based approach through its AI Act, which does not include military use. [23] Organizations like the United Nations continue to push for responsible use and

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[19] War Room warroom.armywarcollege.edu Accessed December 29, 2025
[20] European Parliament /www.europarl.europa.eu Accessed January 1, 2026
[21] Taylor and Francis www.tandfonline.com Accessed January 2, 2026
[22] HRW www.hrw.org Accessed January 1, 2026
[23] CRS www.congress.gov Accessed January 1, 2026

[24]human oversight, but disagreements between states make it difficult to reach a global solution.

Key Member States and NGOs Involved and Their Views

United States [25]

The U.S. is committed to the "responsible use of AI," promoting international declarations for ethical guidelines, as the U.S would like to enhance efficiency and situational awareness whilst adhering to the policies that maintain human judgement over the use of force. Debates continue, especially regarding Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems (LAWS) and ensuring human judgment remains central.

Russia [26]

Russia is rapidly integrating AI into its own military drones, information and cyber warfare, command control (C2), and electronic warfare (EW). Russia's goals are to overcome manpower shortages and resource limitations against Western militaries. Russia is planning to keep with the United States and China in modern warfare and ultimately enhance information processing and create new deterrents. Despite AI focus, the broader Russian military industry struggles with technological modernization. Concerns also exist over autonomous systems of AI violating laws of war and removing human ethical judgment from lethal decisions.

China [27]

China’s military heavily integrated AI across various domains, from autonomous systems, decision support, weapon systems, robotics, cyber warfare (EW). For example, Chinese military research uses DeepSeek, an advanced AI model, for drone swarm tactics and battle simulation. As part of its civil-military fusion doctrine China’s strategy when using AI involves closely linking civilian universities and tech companies with defense needs, which then rapidly accelerated AI’s adoption. China does, however, face issues with the usage of AI, including technical limitations such as unpredictability , unreliability, and data

[24] European Parliament /www.europarl.europa.eu Accessed January 1, 2026
[25] United Nations documents.un.org Accessed January 1, 2026
[26] United Nations documents.un.org Accessed January 1, 2026
[27] United Nations documents.un.org Accessed January 1, 2026

issues, as well as significant ethical and legal concerns, and the strategic risk of an arms race.

NATO[28]

NATO has increasingly acknowledged AI's significance for security and defence, leading to expanded investment in AI-driven military technologies over the past decade. Nato utilizes AI to enhance decision making, improve operations, and counter threats like disinformation. For example, NATO's AI analyzes vast data from all domains, such as cyber and space etc, to provide actionable insights, predict scenarios, and speed up military decisions. However, NATO struggles to ensure trust, addressing skill gaps, and managing risks from adversarial AI.

Timeline of Key Events

Date	Description of Events
1950s–1970s	Early computer systems are used in missile defense, logistics, and calculations, supporting human decision-making rather than replacing it.[29]
1990s	Advances in computing lead to automated targeting, surveillance systems, and early unmanned vehicles, increasing reliance on technology in military operations. [30]
2013	Rapid progress in AI and robotics sparks global concern about autonomous weapons capable of using force without human control.[31]
2014	The UN Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) starts formal discussions on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems, marking the first major international regulatory effort.[32]

[28] European Parliament /www.europarl.europa.eu Accessed January 1, 2026
[29] CHM www.computerhistory.org Accessed December 20, 2025
[30] CHM www.computerhistory.org Accessed December 20, 2025
[31] Live Science www.livescience.com Accessed December 20, 2025
[32] Military militaryembedded.com Accessed December 20, 2025

2018	Civil society organizations call for a pre-emptive international ban on fully autonomous weapons, increasing political and ethical pressure on states.[33]
2020–2022	Major powers including the US, China, and Russia officially incorporate AI into military doctrines, accelerating a global AI arms race.[34]
2022–Present	The war in Ukraine demonstrates real-world use of AI for surveillance, data analysis, drones, and cyber operations, highlighting both effectiveness and risks. [35]
2023	A non-binding international declaration promotes ethical use, human oversight, and compliance with international law in military AI systems.[36]
2024–2025	The UN General Assembly adopts resolutions calling for further study, regulation, and international cooperation on autonomous weapons, with broad member state support[37]

Relevant UN Treaties, Resolutions, and Reports

- UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/78/241 (2023)[38]
- UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/79/62 (2024)[39]
- Pact for the Future (A/RES/79/1, 2024)[40]
- UN Secretary-General Reports on LAWS (2024–2025)[41]

[33] Military militaryembedded.com Accessed December 20, 2026
[34] Military militaryembedded.com Accessed December 20, 2026
[35] Military militaryembedded.com Accessed December 20, 2026
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[41] United Nations www.securitycouncilreport.org Accessed January 3, 2026

- CCW Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) Reports and Working Papers (2017–2025)[42]
- UN Human Rights Council Reports & Special Rapporteur Communications[43]
- UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Reports on AI and Human Rights[44]
- International Humanitarian Law Framework (Geneva Conventions & Additional Protocols)[45]
- Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)[46]
- UN First Committee (Disarmament and International Security) Reports and Debates[47]

Possible Solutions

As artificial intelligence becomes increasingly central to military power, the need for regulation has become more urgent. While states seek to benefit from AI's speed, efficiency, and ability to reduce human risk, unmanaged use creates serious dangers, including escalation, miscalculation, legal uncertainty, and ethical violations. As AI systems take on greater roles in decision-making, targeting, and autonomous operations, the risks of unintended conflict and civilian harm also increase. For this reason, many states, international organizations, and civil society groups are now pushing for stronger governance of military AI.

International Governance and United Nations Frameworks

One widely supported solution is the creation of international governance frameworks under the United Nations. These frameworks could provide common definitions for military AI systems, require meaningful human control over the use of lethal force, and promote transparency between states. From a humanitarian perspective, maintaining human oversight is essential to ensure accountability and compliance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL), particularly the protection of civilians. Some actors support restricting or banning fully autonomous lethal weapons altogether, arguing that machines should not be allowed to make life-and-death decisions without human judgment. Civil society movements, such as the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, strongly advocate for

[42] United Nations meetings.unoda.org Accessed January 2, 2026
[43] United Nations www.ohchr.org Accessed January 2, 2026
[44] United Nations www.ohchr.org Accessed January 2, 2026
[45] ICRC www.icrc.org Accessed January 2, 2026
[46] United Nations legal.un.org Accessed January 2, 2026
[47] United Nations www.un.org

pre-emptive bans on lethal autonomous weapons and have played an important role in raising global awareness.[48]

Risk-Based Regulation and the EU AI Act Model

Another possible approach is a risk-based regulatory model, similar to the European Union's AI Act. Although the EU AI Act explicitly excludes military AI from its legal scope, it still provides a useful framework for thinking about regulation. Under a risk-based approach, AI systems are classified according to their potential harm, with stricter requirements placed on higher-risk systems.[49] Applied to military AI, this could include mandatory testing, safety standards, transparency measures, and strong cybersecurity protections to reduce the risk of system failures or unintended actions. The Act also highlights the challenge of dual-use technologies, such as drones, which can be used for both civilian and military purposes and therefore require careful oversight when entering civilian markets.[50]

Despite its limitations, the EU AI Act may still indirectly influence military AI governance by encouraging higher standards for safety, reliability, and accountability. It also shows how cooperation between civilian and military sectors could be improved by relying on trusted AI systems that meet shared standards. At the same time, military AI must continue to comply with existing international law, including IHL and fundamental human rights obligations. [51]

Confidence-Building Measures and Escalation Prevention

To address security risks and prevent escalation, confidence-building measures could also be introduced. These include information-sharing agreements, clear communication channels during crises, and limitations on high-speed autonomous systems that could otherwise act too quickly for human intervention. [52] Such measures could help reduce misunderstandings and lower the risk of accidental conflict, especially between major powers.

Challenges to Regulation and State Interests

However, regulation faces significant challenges. There is currently no universal certification process or binding international standard for military AI, and global governance

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[48] United Nations docs.un.org Accessed January 4, 2026
[49] European Parliament /www.europarl.europa.eu Accessed January 1, 2026
[50] Science Direct www.sciencedirect.com Accessed January 6, 2026
[51] FIIA fiia.fi Accessed January 3, 2026
[52] European Parliament www.europarl.europa.eu Accessed January 2, 2026

frameworks remain underdeveloped. Discussions at forums such as the REAIM 2023 conference highlighted the lack of multilateral agreements comparable to those that exist for nuclear weapons.[53]While some countries support strict international rules or bans, others prioritize strategic competitiveness and technological leadership. As a result, major powers often prefer flexible, non-binding guidelines, such as voluntary declarations and national oversight mechanisms, which allow innovation to continue while encouraging responsible behavior. [54]

Preventing Misuse by Non-State Actors

Finally, to prevent the misuse of AI by non-state actors, states could strengthen export controls, regulate private technology companies more closely, and expand international cooperation against AI-enabled terrorism and cyber threats. Without these measures, open-source tools and black-market access could allow dangerous technologies to spread beyond state control. [55]

Overall, without international cooperation and effective regulation, the rapid militarization of AI risks undermining global stability, weakening ethical norms in warfare, and increasing the likelihood of future conflicts. [56]Negotiating shared guidelines that balance security, innovation, and humanitarian principles is therefore essential to ensuring that military AI is used responsibly and does not contribute to an uncontrolled arms race. [57]

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