

AI-DRIVEN WARFARE: IMPLICATIONS FOR MILITARY STRATEGY AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

Dr. Bilal Aslam¹
Wasi Ul Haq²

ABSTRACT

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming the contemporary warfare and has a profound impact on the military strategy and international security. AI tools enable the military to detect targets more precisely and react to threats more effectively and promptly. Consequently, the armed forces can make decisions much faster and carry out operations on a more precise basis than previously. Meanwhile, scientists and policy-makers also caution that AI-powered warfare poses a severe threat and a challenge. This research paper explores how AI tools and applications influence military operations, force structure, and doctrine and what are the ethical, legal and strategic risks are associated with AI-powered warfare. Employing a qualitative research design, the paper explores the existing literature in the field and policy-related documents. The findings reveal that while AI tools offer unprecedented capabilities for data analysis, target precision, and rapid decision-making, their accelerated deployment risks triggering a new arms race, emergent escalation, and complex issues of accountability, civilian protection, and human control over lethal autonomous systems. The paper concludes that despite immense tactical and operational benefits, the long-term strategic risks of AI in warfare necessitate urgent international collaboration, robust regulatory frameworks, and the alignment of new security policies to help guarantee international security.

KEYWORDS: Autonomous Weapons, Drone Warfare, Military Strategy, Non-Contact Warfare, International Security, Cyber Warfare, Ethics.

INTRODUCTION

Technology has been at the center stage of influencing the nature of warfare. Since the discovery of gunpowder, up to the tanks, airplanes and the nuclear weapons, every significant technological discovery has altered the manner in which wars are waged and the concept of military strength. In the modern world, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the most recent and potentially the most revolutionary change in military technology. The introduction of AI, with its rapid development, has created new modes of warfare, affecting the strategies of planning wars, the actions on the battlefield, and the world's relationships in the sphere of security. There is a consensus among scholars that the use of AI-based systems is transforming the modern warfare and compelling armies to redefine its

¹ Assistant Professor, School of Integrated Social Sciences, The University of Lahore, Pakistan. bilal.aslam@siss.uol.edu.pk.

² Graduate of the Department of Integrated Social Sciences, The University of Lahore.

conventional strategies and doctrines (Atkinson, 2024).

AI-driven warfare may be defined as the process of using smart systems that can interpret data, identify patterns and make or assist decisions with minimal human input. These are autonomous weapons or semi-autonomous weapons, intelligent surveillance systems, high-end sensors, and AI-supported command-and-control systems. These technologies enable military forces to perform at faster speeds and with greater complexity than is possible by humans. Taking the example of AI-based capabilities, real-time satellite imagery or drone footage and data at the battlefield can be analyzed by AI-powered systems and viewed by the commanders to allow a better response to the emerging threats. This is speedy and efficient, which can give a decisive advantage during the modern conflicts. The Russia-Ukraine war is one of the brightest examples of the AI-driven non-contact warfare.

It is reported that in this conflict alone, drones cause approximately 20-30 percent of casualties on the battlefield, which proves the fact that unmanned and AI-assisted systems have become the focus of battlefield processes (Hunder, 2024). Moreover, it was observed that AI enhances the precision of the first-person-view (FPV) drone strikes by raising the hit rates between 30-50 percent to close to 80 percent. This is greatly attributed to AI-based targeting, tracking and navigation systems which minimize the need for human control over everything. Nevertheless, regardless of all these benefits, the increased involvement of AI in war has become a cause of serious concerns among military commanders, policymakers and scholars. Other authorities have termed the emergence of AI weapons an “Oppenheimer moment”, claiming that the world might be entering a new era of dangerous military rivalry akin to the initial nuclear era. Opponents also believe that AI would make war more distant and less responsible as it removes human beings from key decision-making roles. There is concern among others that the autonomous systems might make the cost of using force politically and morally lower, leading to increased conflicts that are harder to manage (Marwala, 2023). It is not just the technical analysis of warfare that is driven by AI. It also requires studying tendencies of military innovation in history, the slow penetration of the digital revolution into the military setting, and the strategic, ethical, and legal dilemmas associated with AI. The paper thus seeks to contribute to the academic discourse by synthesizing existing knowledge and proposing a framework for understanding the complex interplay between rapid technological advancement and the imperative for responsible governance in military AI. The following are the key questions that have been addressed in the paper.

1. How do the AI tools and applications influence military operations, force structure, and doctrine across different domains?
2. What are the ethical, legal, and strategic risks associated with the proliferation of AI-powered warfare, and what concrete measures can be adopted to mitigate these risks and ensure international security?

DIGITALISATION AGE AND THE AGE OF EARLY ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

There was no sudden introduction of the integration of artificial intelligence into warfare. Rather, it became an outcome of a more extended process, which had started in the digital revolution. Over several decades, the blistering pace of computing power, software

development, and digital communication systems has altered the way militaries gather and process data. The huge quantity of data that modern surveillance systems and sensors produced became uncontrollable to human eyes and could only be processed by computers and software designed to analyze the messages linked to those sensors and systems, as military operations became more and more data-oriented. Consequently, the initial AI assistive tools were created to help analysts sort, filter, and interpret the information more efficiently. One of the earliest applications of AI in the military was image recognition, which enabled computer systems to distinguish between the vehicles, buildings, and troop squads using satellite photography. The dual-use aspect of AI technologies was one more significant aspects of this period. The vast majority of early AI tools were initially designed for civilian use, including commercial data analysis, image processing and targeted advertising. These technologies were, however, readily modified for military purposes. To say the least, the identical algorithms that were utilized to analyse the movement of consumers can be altered by the enemy movement patterns or psychological processes. Burton and Soare (2019) argue that this intersection of civilian AI development and military applications made it hard to distinguish between the peaceful uses of AI technologies and military-related use cases, which created challenges for controlling AI technologies.

INITIAL ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE HYPE

With the emergence of artificial intelligence, which started growing at an accelerated rate, expectations and enthusiasm regarding its military application were extremely high. It is commonly referred to as the era of AI hype, when policymakers, military planners, and researchers started to envision radical warfare transformation brought about by smart machines. Much of this optimism was driven by high-profile successes of AI systems in complicated processes that were long-held as being dominated by human beings. The example in this case is the use of AI programs like *AlphaZero*, which have shown themselves in the ability to match the world-level human contestants in games like *chess and go*, espoused to be games of high strategy and flexibility. Such successes made most defense experts believe that AI would also perform well in military decision-making contexts.

During military simulations and controlled experiments, AI systems started to demonstrate good performance in such tasks as flight control, threat identification, and tactical maneuvering. Another major test in which an AI system controlled the X-62A aircraft was impressively demonstrated in 2023 by US Air Force and DARPA when the aircraft was flown for more than seventeen hours during at least one training exercise. In another high-flying experiment, an AI agent won a dogfight scenario, winning five out simulated dogfights against a human fighter pilot five out of five. Although such experiments did not imply that AI can find immediate use in the process of replacing human pilots, they provided a clear indication of how fast and precisely algorithms can react to complex combat scenarios (Kirichenko, 2025). Nevertheless, the hype phase significantly contributed to the elevation of AI to the heart of the military planning. It promoted AI integration through experimentation, innovation and institutionalisation. Meanwhile, it also emphasised the importance of being careful and making reasonable evaluations of the shortcomings of AI. This skepticism and optimism still dominate the discussions of AI in the sphere of war.

PRESENT STATE OF AI INTEGRATION IN THE MILITARY

Currently, AI adoption in the military can be perceived as a slow and gradual process as opposed to the abrupt removal of human control. A majority of defense entities seek to focus on so-called human-machine teaming, which implies that AI systems do not make autonomous decisions. The concept of AI as a force multiplier in this model works to provide fast processing of information, recognition of patterns, and recommend possible courses of action. AI is applied in modern militaries for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance of large amounts of data from satellites, drones, radar systems, and electronic signals. AI systems are able to identify signs of missile launch, movement of troops, and changes in enemy dynamics much more quickly than human analysts, which allows responding sooner.

In supply chain and logistics, AI is used to optimize supply chains and to predict equipment failure and to facilitate resource distribution. These applications save on operational costs and improve efficiency. Command and control systems are also under testing to use AI. AI assistants will contribute to the ability of the commander to consider various scenarios, resources on the battlefield and decrease information overload. Such systems are not supposed to substitute human judgment, as stated in official military reports. Programs like the US Project Convergence emphasize the need to integrate military services with private technological companies to build AI (Department of War, 2026). Figure 1 illustrates that contemporary military AI is primarily used in intelligence, surveillance, and logistical support roles rather than fully autonomous combat functions (Marwala, 2023).

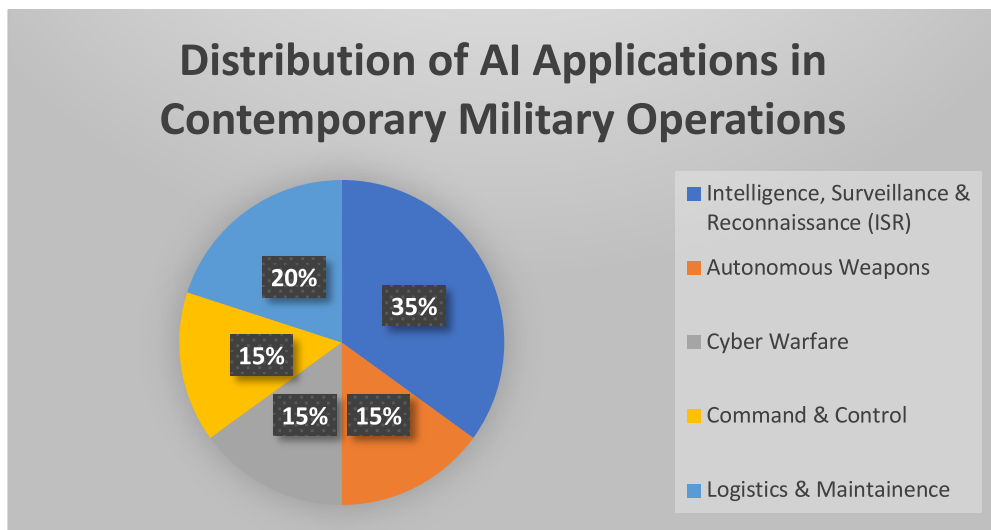


Figure 1: Major Areas of Artificial Intelligence Application in Contemporary Military Operations.

AI WEAPON SYSTEMS

Autonomous weapon systems are considered one of the most controversial uses of AI in the military. They are devices that can sense and pursue their targets with little human discussion, including robotic ground vehicles, autonomous naval surface ships, and loitering missiles. Proponents say that such systems could be deployed in high-risk settings, react more quickly than humans and help protect the lives of soldiers (Marwala, 2023). These systems are improved by AI in several ways: the machines are able to navigate roads, locate targets, and assist human operators, as well as provide decision support. AI enables human beings to make better and faster decisions by minimizing the cognitive load. Nonetheless, ethical issues also play an important role. Allowing machines to make life-or-death choices raises the question of accountability, particularly when autonomous systems cause unintentional harm (Marwala, 2023).

➤ UV'S /DRONE

The most obvious example of AI application in modern armies is, perhaps, the drones, or Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs). The events during the Russia-Ukraine conflict have emphasized the decisiveness of drones when it comes to reconnaissance, targeting and direct attacks. Both sides deploy enormous numbers of drones, some of which have AI-aided target acquisition capabilities and which are estimated to account for 70-80% of casualties in the battlefield in certain cases (Hunder, 2024). AI assists drones in tracking their target, managing other drones and operating despite the degraded communication. Projects by researchers are even creating drone swarms where multiple UAVs can operate in an autonomous way to saturate defenses. Strategic calculations might change as these swarms alter them. Unmanned Ground Vehicles (UGVs) are also becoming AI-enabled. Reconnaissance, logistics missions and fighting missions have been carried out by hundreds of UGVs in Ukraine. This is an indication of a novel battlefield where humans and machines collaborate and share the responsibility and complement each other in their strong sides (Hunder, 2024). As shown in Figure 2, AI-assisted drones account for a substantial share of battlefield casualties in the Russia-Ukraine conflict (Hunder, 2024; Brown & Wilson, 2023).

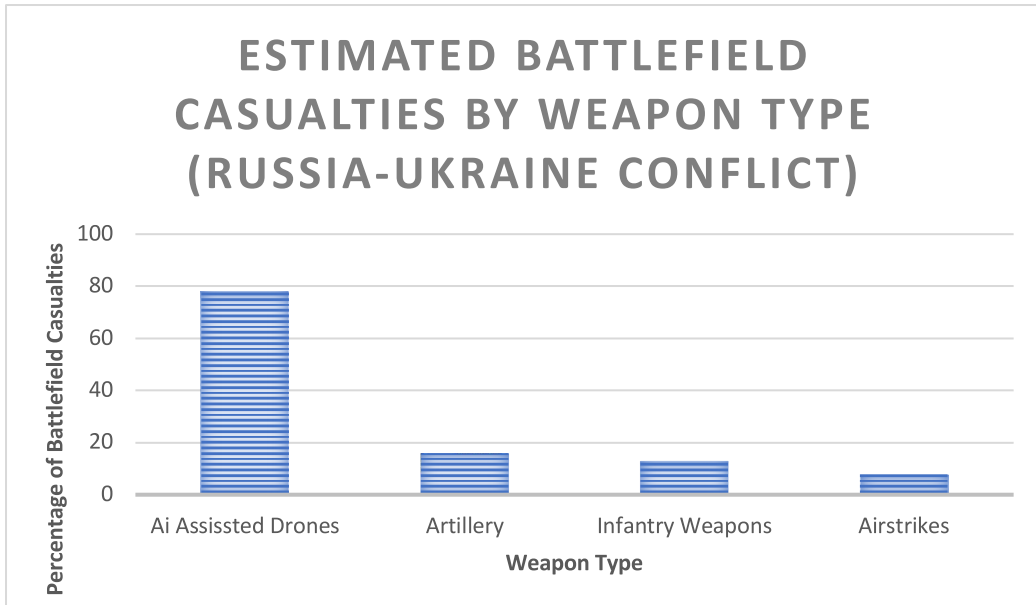


Figure 2: Estimated Battlefield Casualties by Weapon Type in the Russia–Ukraine Conflict

➤ ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE CYBER-WARFARE

Cybersecurity and information warfare are turning into focus areas for AI, as well. AI systems are able to detect cyber intrusion, malware and anomalies much quicker than human analysts. On the offensive front, AI automates attacks, such as phishing, code development and vulnerability scanning. Intelligence agencies also deploy AI to keep an eye on any online spaces for threatening content or influence activities. AI has increased the magnitude and rate of disinformation campaigns. As an example, social media posts made with AI and deepfake videos can be used to target foreign communities with personalized messages and thus influence populations without the involvement of many humans. AI technology in electronic warfare enables the drones and other systems to keep operating even when communication channels are compromised through visual recognition and autonomous hacking methods (Hunder, 2024).

MILITARY STRATEGY AND AI

The integration of AI is transforming the manner in which wars are planned and fought by armies. AI is transforming strategy in numerous ways, such as the way forces can be organized and how decisions can be made expeditiously on the battlefield, etc.

➤ MILITARY ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

AI is reshaping the structure of the army. Militaries are beginning to move away from the large and conventional units in favor of smaller, nimbler units. It has become possible to have small drone and robot systems that will be able to affect large battles with no risk to human lives. Scientists assume that in the future, swarms of drones and robotic formations can take the lead in the battle and further decrease the number of regular

soldiers or pilots (Marwala, 2023). New military principles for single-purpose drone crews or robot teams might be introduced. One example is the US discussing AI-native warfighting, or the development of completely new strategies that will take full advantage of AI abilities. Such approaches will allow weaker or less- developed countries to offset more powerful opposition. One of the real-life examples is Ukraine, which made effective use of low-cost drones against a larger, more military force. In the future, armies will become more dependent on the information and algorithms, as well as AI- based strategies, rather than conventional tank, ship, or soldier numbers.

➤ **HUMAN ROLE AND JUDGMENT**

Humans cannot be deprived of the military decision-making process even with AI. Soldiers always underscore the fact that AI can help and in no case should it be used to make decisions that are life or death. Strategy has to deal with morale, leadership and human judgment. Concurrently, AI can minimize error and fatigue since machines can perform repetitive tasks instead of humans; hence, more intricate planning can be performed by humans. There are also new jobs, such as AI operators, controllers, and data analysts who operate alongside the conventional military staff. This implies that training and doctrine will have to respond to clarify human and AI responsibilities (Marwala, 2023). Figure 3 demonstrates that while AI plays a significant role in analytical and tactical functions, final decision-making authority remains with human commanders (Marwala, 2023; Goldstein, 2024).

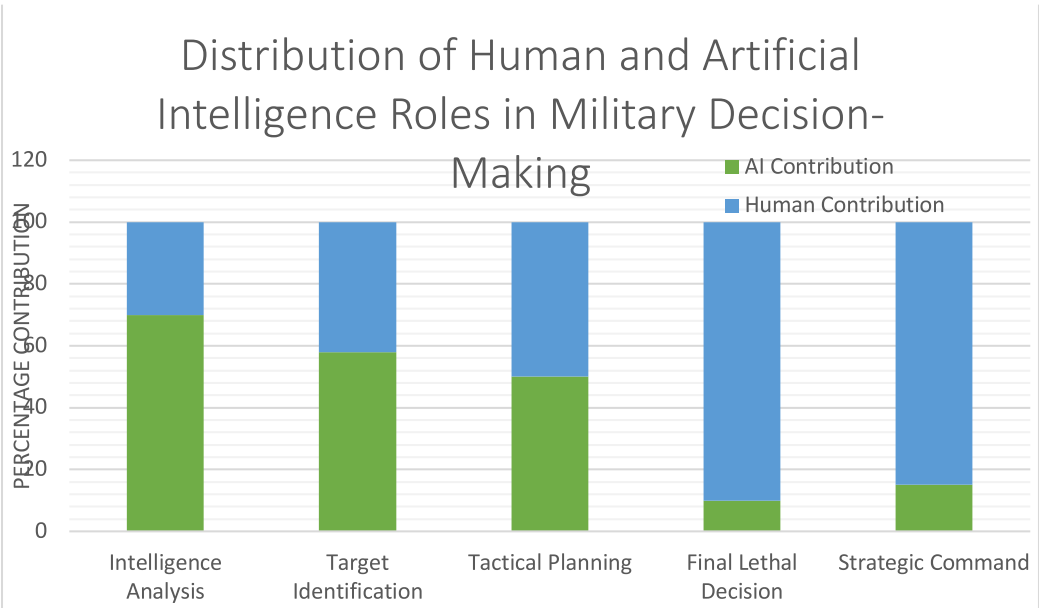


Figure 3: Distribution of Human and Artificial Intelligence Roles in Military Decision-Making

➤ **UNPREDICTABILITY**

The AI is an effective tool, although it is not perfect. As history demonstrates, a low-technology tool can be difficult to counter for high-tech systems. Intelligence systems may also be interfered with, deceived, or hacked. Militaries should not stop testing AI, but they need to have backups and must not overestimate its functions. Even in the case of advanced AI, experts caution that human creativity and improvisation can still win. An effective military approach will use AI with traditional methods and realize its limitations. The commanders will be forced to adapt their forces to combine human and robotic forces, secure networks within hybrid battlefields and ensure situational awareness in cases where AI systems will operate without human intervention.

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY IMPLICATIONS

➤ **AI ARMS RACE**

The emergence of artificial intelligence in military life has raised worries about a global arms race. Major powers are increasingly perceiving AI superiority as a crucial part of national security that provokes states to spend significant funds on military AI capabilities. The US has publicly discussed AI as a determining factor in the future of warfare, whereas China has also proclaimed AI a core priority in its national developmental policies. Other countries are also boosting their AI initiatives, such as Russia and India to keep pace (RAND Corporation, 2025). Such competition makes this environment more unstable since states can be pressured to roll out AI systems without necessarily testing or regulating them. As in the past weapons contests, including nuclear and missile rivalries, the strategic fear factor causes a rush to outpace the other party rather than focusing on safety valves. The higher the autonomy of the AI system, the higher the chances of misunderstanding or unwanted escalation, particularly when tensions are raised. The major global powers are increasingly prioritizing military artificial intelligence, reinforcing concerns about a new international arms race (Carter, 2025; RAND Corporation, 2025).

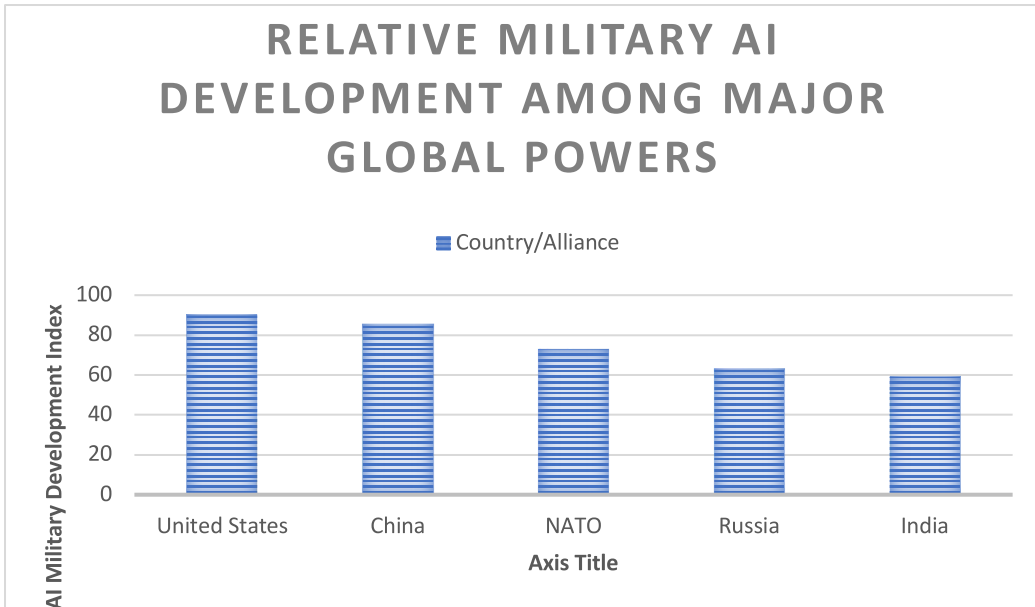


Figure 4: Relative Military AI Development and Strategic Emphasis Among Major Global Powers

➤ ALLIANCE AND MULTILATERAL RESPONSES

Competition in AI does not stop at state boundaries, but it also influences alliances and multilateral security agreements. An AI strategy has been published by NATO to coordinate the development of member states due to its strategic significance. Efforts like the Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA) are meant to promote interoperability and collaborative invention. These joint endeavors help to avoid duplication and improve joint defence powers. Nevertheless, they also present the problem of trust and transparency. States might be unwilling to disclose their sensitive algorithms or data, which can lead to espionage and loss of competitive advantage. Consequently, while alliances want to collaborate, national interests still shape AI development.

➤ ARMS CONTROL CHALLENGES

The conventional arms control systems do not work well to control the use of AI-based weapons. This is in contrast to nuclear or chemical weapons, which are hardware-based, dual-use, and can be simply hidden in civilian infrastructure. Burton and Soare (2019) stated that this renders verification and enforcement highly challenging. Despite the Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems (LAWS) being actively discussed in the context of the United Nations Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), the states have been unable to find a single definition and set of boundaries. The fact that AI development is progressing quickly adds another layer to the regulatory efforts since, in many cases, civilian AI development outpaces policy creation (Marwala, 2023).

➤ **STRATEGIC STABILITY AND ESCALATION**

Warfare using AI partially affects strategic stability. On the one hand, AI-enhanced surveillance and the early-warning system can contribute to deterrence by diminishing the possibility of surprise attacks. Conversely, the reduction of the crisis reaction time due to faster decision-making and automated reactions can cause escalation by mistake. In case an AI system alerts of a threat and it is mistaken, it may prompt a fast military reaction even before a human can respond. This is particularly hazardous in flashpoint areas like Taiwan or other hot spots with low-intensity tensions. According to scholars, although AI can lead to a more effective battlefield, it can also increase the likelihood of accidental fighting (RAND Corporation, 2025).

➤ **ETHICAL, LEGAL AND HUMANITARIAN IMPLICATIONS**

One of the most disputable topics of the modern security discourse is the ethical issues of AI in warfare. The use of autonomous weapons casts some serious doubts on the responsibility and safety of civilians and morality. Researchers who oppose the use of machines in war claim that machines are incapable of making the right decisions to differentiate between combatants and civilians in intricate settings. Some of the significant ethical questions that were identified and pointed out by Marwala (2023) are who bears responsibility when AI systems cause harm. The international humanitarian law that is currently in force was not formulated to accommodate autonomous decision-making systems, which creates legal loopholes that are yet to be addressed. These fears have brought about the calls for partial bans, stringent control, or a guarantee of human control in all decisions that are life-threatening.

➤ **NON-STATE ACTORS AND PROLIFERATION**

State actors are not the only ones who could have AI-enabled weapons. Given that the number of low-cost drones and the open-source AI software continues to become more accessible, the proliferation to non-state actors, such as militias and terrorist groups, becomes more of a possibility. In at least a number of conflicts, non-state actors have deployed drones with rudimentary autonomous functions. Due to the spread of AI technologies, non-state organizations can acquire the power of national armed forces. This blurs the boundaries between war and crime and adds to global insecurity of the world more than do conventional interstate wars.

➤ **INTELLIGENCE AND SURVEILLANCE**

AI has greatly increased capabilities for intelligence and surveillance. States can detect potential threats earlier by analyzing satellite images, social media, and communications using AI, meaning that data can be analysed sooner. Even nuclear activity can be detected by geospatial AI systems that identify troop movements, weapon deployment, and weapons. Although these features can be used to increase security, they raise the issue of mass surveillance as well as privacy. The use of the AI-enhanced intelligence expands the field of international security beyond the military sphere to civil freedoms and control of information.

REAL WORLD CASE STUDIES

AI has ceased to be a concept of future wars. AI technologies are already in the field and

the combat and strategy of many countries use AI technologies. Five practical applications that demonstrate the way AI is transforming military outcomes, altering doctrine, and creating both possibilities and challenges are provided below.

➤ **UKRAINE–RUSSIA WAR (2022–PRESENT)**

The Ukrainian war has turned out to be a major real-life application of AI in warfare and the example of non-contact warfare. At the beginning of the conflict, Ukraine had a problem with airpower supplies, and so the country depended greatly on drones, air reconnaissance, and strikes. Numerous of these drones were made using civilian components and AI navigation code, demonstrating how commercial-off-the-shelf technology can be converted into military applications (Smith, 2023). Drones turned out to be a big element on the war front, with the many of the killings coming from them, and both parties struggling to innovate faster than the other. The Ukrainian developers designed less expensive AI modules (up to 25 dollars) that enhanced targeting so that soldiers could concentrate on planning and not micromanaging all the strikes (Brown and Wilson, 2023). Electronic warfare was something to consider as well, and fiber-optic networks and autonomous navigation were used to evade jamming (Khan, 2023). On its part, Russia deployed Kamikaze drones and tested autonomous ground robots. The two nations gathered huge quantities of data to enhance AI capabilities, which can include video feeds of surveillance drones, indicating that AI can be readily adapted and scaled during an active conflict (Marwala, 2023).

➤ **US AND ALLIED AI STRATEGY**

The NATO-allied countries and the US have sought AI-led efforts in military initiatives, which focus on speed, integration, and experimentation. The Department of War AI Strategy (2026) documents show that the US Army desires to use AI in a matter of hours, even days, after a model has been released, with speed being the main consideration rather than the quality of the system (Johnson, 2026). This approach shows a change from cautious engineering towards development towards rapid iteration of AI implementation. NATO has also focused on joint AI investment and testing schemes to make sure that allies can operate together (Anderson and Lee, 2025). This is because Western armies value the use of AI as a significant edge in ensuring defense preparedness and operational capability (Carter, 2025).

➤ **CHINA’S AI BUILD-UP**

The use of AI has become a top priority in China both in civilian and military applications. It has a Next Generation AI Development Plan (2017) that provides multi-decade ambitions, one of them being modernising its military (Li, 2017). The strategy of China is a mixture of top-down government planning with a high-end commercial AI industry that allows civilian technologies to easily move to defense applications. The most recent military activities have demonstrated applications of AI-controlled drones, autonomous vehicles, and missile systems (Wang and Zhao, 2023). This approach of China combines centralised planning with its domestic AI market, which can provide the nation with an advantage in rapid implementation. Simultaneously, the focus on state-based innovation may be counter-productive to creativity in contrast with more unrestricted market practices in the West (Chen, 2024). Also, AI is applied in the Chinese information operations, such as the creation of AI for propaganda and influence campaign content

(Huang, 2023).

➤ **NON-STATE ACTORS AND REGIONAL WARS (YEMEN, GAZA, ISRAEL)**

Artificial intelligence is also becoming widespread among the non-state actors. Small drones with simple autopilot systems are common among insurgency groups in Yemen and Gaza (El-Sayed, 2023). Though such systems are not on par with national armies, they are nonetheless automated and can effectively disrupt regular armies. Even advanced armies such as the Israeli military apply AI in supporting the targeting and operational planning. One of the systems that Israeli forces are alleged to use repeatedly is machine learning to scan for potential targets to minimize collateral damage (Levy, 2023). Nevertheless, there are also disadvantages to the use of AI: the systems may commit errors or misidentify people, and, therefore, human control of the algorithm is necessary (Goldstein, 2024).

➤ **AI IN MARITIME AND NAVAL OPERATIONS**

The AI is also changing the naval warfare. The US-China and Russia are developing AI for maritime drones, autonomous vessels, and underwater systems to increase the detection, threat evaluation, and coordination efforts (Peterson, 2023). The systems are capable of reacting faster to threats such as piracy, missile strikes or even territorial conflicts by efficiently processing large volumes of sensor information. Nonetheless, there are still issues of bad weather, electronic disruption, or system breakdowns (Miller & Singh, 2023). Fallback procedures and human supervision are still imperative to the effective and safe deployment. To conclude, in these five situations involving drone war in Ukraine and national AI strategies in the US, China, and local conflicts, AI is no longer an experiment. It works proactively to influence the ways of observation, decision-making and action of forces. Still, some problems are voiced in each case, such as ethical concerns, technical malfunctions, and the necessity of human control. Military activities will be successful only when global forces and smaller countries strike the right balance between the speed of innovation and the strategies, control, and management of risks (Marwala, 2023; Johnson, 2026; Li, 2017).

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

In general, there is no such thing as purely heroic or dystopian AI-assisted warfare; it is a complex matter of ambiguity. AI could suggest unequivocal benefits to the companies that embrace it early enough, yet it brings about the danger of instability and unforeseen side effects. There are a few main aspects that emerge from the analysis of AI in war nowadays.

➤ **DATA AND TRAINING**

AI systems require massive amounts of data to produce their results. Wars such as the one in Ukraine and Russia offer massive amounts of battlefield data in the form of drone videos, sensor outputs, and simulations, which may be incorporated to enhance AI (Brown and Wilson, 2023). Military forces will be in competition over gathering this data since it gives a strategic advantage, but it puts them under pressure to keep on innovating and adapting. Training AI is not simply a tech-related matter but also concerns amassing sufficient real-world information that is representative of reality to ensure accurate and

reliable AI systems (Marwala, 2023).

➤ **HUMAN JUDGMENT IS NECESSARY**

Despite the abilities of AI, there is still a need for human oversight. Both scholars and the military think that AI is supposed to help in making decisions, but not make life-or-death decisions by itself (Smith, 2023). Pilots, commanders, and soldiers continually reiterate that AI would be useful in enhancing targeting, predicting threats, and planning but should leave the authorization to act lethally to human beings (Goldstein, 2024). This establishes a hybrid form of warfare whereby AI automates routine or high-speed operations with humans overseeing and intervening when necessary.

➤ **ETHICS AND PUBLIC OPINION**

Ethical and social issues of AI applications in fighting are also serious. The increased acceptance of AI weapons frequently results in both national and global demands to regulate and ensure accountability (Anderson and Lee, 2025). Civilian casualties or accidental damage may create opposition and damage the image of a military. Hence, it is paramount that armed forces should incorporate clear moral patterns and accountability in their AI application. Ethical use of AI is not merely a public relations requirement but also a strategic need to preserve public trust (Huang, 2023).

➤ **ARMS CONTROL AND NORMS**

International norms or treaties are currently nonexistent for AI and cyber technologies, unlike nuclear weapons (Carter, 2025). Such a lack of control heightens the suspicion among the countries and exposes the nations to the danger of inadvertent escalation. Some experts indicate that the transparency provisions and collaborative structures may arise around common ground, including avoiding the unwanted conflicts. Nevertheless, AI programs are easy to hide and may be used to do many things, making them not easy to verify and control (Li, 2017). The process of establishing international AI standards in warfare will probably be harder than standard arms regulation.

➤ **LONG-TERM AI EVOLUTION**

Much of the current AI in the military is narrow AI, which performs one particular job, such as reconnaissance and targeting or logistics (Peterson, 2023). Eventually, general AI, which will be able to think in a general sense, may radically change war. Even minor, day-to-day advances, like the self-learning algorithms or more autonomous systems, will keep changing the strategic calculations (Marwala, 2023). The planning of the military should not be fixed and should not assume the predictability of AI technologies. Overreliance on one's power may fail in the unpredictable battlefield, requiring adherence to flexible war tactics. AI can present substantial benefits in warfare, and it does not replace the need for strategic wisdom and decision-making. Leaders need to learn to work with accelerated decisions, various tools of AI, and changing weaknesses. Meanwhile, prudence and caution are essential: any advantage from AI will probably be met with a countermeasure from the opposition (Johnson, 2026; Goldstein, 2024). The key to successful AI integration along with military operations lies in effective balancing of innovation, ethical considerations, and flexibility of strategic and actions and judgment of people.

CONCLUSION

AI is already significantly transforming the sphere of the military. In its incarnation as autonomous vehicles, machine-assisted decision-making, and intelligent sensors, AI is changing the nature of combat in both tactical and strategic planning. Such technologies provide obvious strategic benefits: they enable forces to respond faster to threats, minimize risks to human soldiers, and provide new opportunities for conducting military operations. To illustrate the point, even small armies can obtain a significant benefit through technology: the small forces deployed in Ukraine have been able to have a disproportionate effect on the battlefield through cheaply produced AI-controlled drones.

Simultaneously, such developments are associated with grave international security dangers. The AI race may trigger more aggressive military stances, less human supervision, and even the possibility of AI systems performing unexpected actions. Legal and ethical systems have not kept pace with these technological changes, leaving room where AI might be used to make life-threatening choices without human involvement. How states cope with such changes will impact world stability significantly. The RAND Corporation notes that the inability to collaborate on safety standards and confidence-building activities might increase volatility and mistrust, exposing the international system to accidents or eruptions of conflict.

In the future, AI needs to be handled with respect by the military and policymakers. The main course of action would be to focus on stressing the role of humans, investing in AI threat protection, and engaging in coming up with international conventions and standards. There is a need to balance technological and policy innovation. When applied appropriately, AI will be able to increase the level of security by enhancing defensive and deterrence capacities. However, once abused or unchecked, it may increase the speed of, cause more deaths in, and make war unpredictable. It is not just a possibility that AI will be used in war — it already exists on the battlefield. The capabilities and risks associated with AI should be fully comprehended by strategists to ensure that this tool enhances security without posing new risks.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

REFERENCES

- Anderson, P., & Lee, J. (2025). AI adoption and military interoperability in NATO: Challenges and opportunities. *International Defense Review*, 32(4), 45–60.
- Brown, T., & Wilson, R. (2023). Drone warfare and AI in the Ukraine conflict. *Journal of Modern Military Studies*, 18(2), 112–130.
- Carter, L. (2025). Artificial intelligence and global security: Risks and governance. RAND Corporation.
- Chen, Y. (2024). State-led AI innovation in China: Military and civilian integration. *Asian Journal of Strategic Studies*, 12(1), 21–38.

- El-Sayed, H. (2023). Non-state actors and the rise of autonomous drones in regional conflicts. *Middle East Security Review*, 9(3), 67–82.
- Goldstein, M. (2024). Ethical challenges of AI-assisted targeting in modern warfare. *Ethics and International Affairs*, 38(1), 55–72.
- Huang, L. (2023). AI in Chinese information operations: Propaganda and influence strategies. *Journal of Cyber Studies*, 14(4), 77–95.
- Johnson, K. (2026). Fast-cycle AI adoption in US military strategy. *Defense Technology Journal*, 20(1), 15–30.
- Khan, S. (2023). Electronic warfare and AI: Innovations in counter-drone strategies. *International Journal of Defense Technology*, 10(2), 40–55.
- Levy, D. (2023). AI-assisted targeting in Israeli defense operations: Opportunities and limitations. *Security and Defense Review*, 7(2), 88–104.
- Li, X. (2017). Next generation artificial intelligence development plan: Implications for military modernization. *Beijing Policy Review*, 5(1), 1–20.
- Marwala, T. (2023). *Artificial intelligence and the future of warfare*. Oxford University Press.
- Miller, J., & Singh, R. (2023). AI and autonomous systems in naval operations. *Naval Technology Review*, 16(3), 33–50.
- Peterson, A. (2023). AI in strategic military decision-making: Lessons from emerging technologies. *Global Security Journal*, 11(4), 99–115.
- Smith, R. (2023). The Ukraine conflict and low-cost AI-directed drones. *International Military Affairs*, 15(2), 56–72.
- Wang, Q., & Zhao, Y. (2023). China's military exercises with AI-controlled systems: Capabilities and implications. *Asian Defense Journal*, 19(3), 24–4