Research Report

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Developing International Regulations on the military use of artificial intelligence and emerging technologies

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Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) is continuing to influence the way countries approach their national defence and military programs. AI can analyse large amounts of data, help with making military decisions and operate certain military systems with limited human intervention. Other technologies, such as advanced surveillance and cyber capabilities, are also changing the way wars are fought. Although these developments increase the efficiency and protect military personnel, they also raise concerns about civilian safety.

General Overview

Development of AI in the military

AI refers to the computer systems that can perform tasks that are usually done by humans, such as analysing data and recognizing patterns. In the military, AI can help with intelligence gathering, surveillance, logistics and threat assessment. Emerging technologies also include autonomous systems and advanced robotics

These developments offer several advantages. AI can process all kinds of data faster than humans, help understand difficult situations and respond to potential threats. Automated systems can also perform dangerous tasks, which lowers risks for military personnel.

Autonomous weapons

One of the most controversial issues is the development of autonomous weapon systems. These are systems that can engage targets without human engagement. The main concern is how much responsibility should be given to these machines with such important decisions. AI may misinterpret information, fail to recognise innocent threats or behave unpredictably. Their decisions can also be difficult to explain, especially when they rely on complex algorithms. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has called for new international rules to forbid certain unpredictable autonomous weapons and systems designed to target humans directly. It also recommends strict limits on other weapons, including supervision by humans.

International law

International law already established rules for armed conflict. These include the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution. Distinction requires parties to distinguish between civilians and combatants. Proportionality forbids attacks that are expected to cause unnecessary civilian harm. Precaution requires parties to take steps to prevent or minimise harm to civilians. However, applying them to automated systems can be difficult. For example, if an AI system incorrectly identifies a civilian object as a military target, it may be unclear who is responsible. Ultimately, states and individuals must still comply with their legal obligations. Another challenge is that countries disagree on how strict the regulations should be. Some governments favour legally binding restrictions, while others choose voluntary guidelines and national oversight. They may argue that strict rules could slow development of these technologies or weaken their ability to defend themselves.

Risks to international security

The military use of AI can also affect international stability. Countries may feel pressured to develop similar technologies because they fear they may fall behind and that rivals may gain a military advantage. This can create an arms race in which governments invest a large amount of money in the military, while disregarding their civilians. AI may also increase the speed of military decision-making. While this can improve responses to threats, it may leave leaders with less time to understand information and prevent misunderstandings. Incorrect data or technical failures could produce unwanted outcomes. Furthermore, advanced technologies are not as accessible to every country. Wealthier countries generally have greater resources to expand their technology, which could widen military inequality. International cooperation is therefore important to make sure regulations aren’t made exclusively by the wealthiest countries.

Major Parties Involved

1. United states of America (USA)

The USA is a major developer of military AI and invests massive amounts of money in defence research and technology. It has an interest in maintaining its military strength while ensuring that AI is reliable and follows the laws that are made.

2. People's republic of China

China is another major power in technology and military that is investing in AI and other technologies. It has an interest in developing advanced defensive systems and influencing international norms. China participates in international discussions about automated weapons and has supported discussions about potential rules, although governments disagree with the form of these rules. Cooperation between China and other major powers is important to make sure agreements are effective.

3. Russian Federation

Russia is an important party because of its military capabilities and interest in advancing technology. It generally places emphasis on national security and maintaining military advantages. International negotiations involving Russia are significant because disagreements between major parties can lead to difficulties in establishing standards and prevent escalation of technological competition.

4. United Nations (UN)

The UN provides a forum where countries can discuss international peace, security and consequences of military technologies. These discussions serve to identify common concerns and consider possible international rules. The UN is essential because it allows countries with different interests and levels of technological development to participate in discussions

5. International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

The ICRC is an organization that works to protect people affected by armed conflicts and to create respect for international humanitarian law. It is not a government and does not make treaties, but provides legal and humanitarian assistance to states. Regarding autonomous weapons, the ICRC advocates for agreed restrictions to protect civilians.

Possible Solutions

1. Establish a binding international agreement

Countries should negotiate an international agreement that clearly states which AI applications are permitted, restricted or forbidden. This agreement should create minimum standards while allowing countries to use AI for lawful defence purposes. It should also address autonomous weapons and be reviewed regularly as technologies develop.

2. Require human control

Decisions involving lethal force should remain as a choice by human judgement and responsibility. Human operators should understand the limitations, purpose and operating conditions of the system. They should also have the ability to intervene when necessary. Systems whose consequences cannot be accurately predicted or controlled should be forbidden or have tight restrictions.

3. Testing and legal reviews

Before an AI tool is used, states should assess the reliability, possible biases and potential effects it can have on civilians. Testing should take place in different conditions to identify weaknesses before they cause harm. States should also review new technologies to see if they comply with international law.