Submission of Views by Pakistan in accordance with UNGA resolution 79/239 titled, "Artificial intelligence in the military domain and its implications for international peace and security"

1. The rapid advancement and integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies in the military domain are poised to fundamentally transform warfare. AI is increasingly integrated into military operations through applications in autonomous weapon systems, command and control, decision support systems, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), training, logistics, and cyber/information warfare. While these advancements offer operational efficiencies, they also pose significant risks to international peace and security.

Challenges associated with AI in the military domain

Strategic risks – interplay with nuclear weapons

2. The integration of AI with nuclear weapons systems introduces strategic risks, particularly in nuclear command, control, and communications (NC3). When AI capabilities are integrated with nuclear force posture and employment policies, they can lead to miscalculations, accidents, and catastrophic consequences.

3. The concept of nuclear deterrence relies heavily on human rationality, perception, and political decision-making. The integration of AI potentially removes or significantly reduces these critical human factors, increasing the risk of automated or accidental escalation. Recognizing these profound concerns, some states have publicly committed to retaining meaningful human control over nuclear weapons employment decisions—a principle Pakistan supports and urges all nuclear-weapon states to endorse.

4. In regions with nuclear weapons, reliance on AI-driven decision support systems and fully autonomous weapons systems in the conventional domain can also lead to escalatory risks. Completely eliminating human control during crises could make it difficult to control the magnitude and duration of conflicts. Automating responses in volatile, high-stakes scenarios, particularly in regions with tense nuclear dynamics, can compound conventional-nuclear entanglement and adversely impact strategic stability.

5. The use of AI for data assessment and ISR can engender a false sense of confidence for states considering pre-emptive, destabilizing counterforce strikes or targeting second-strike capabilities, posing serious risks to regional and global stability

Operational risks – Loss of human agency

6. AI-driven autonomy in military operations risks diminishing human oversight, complicating crisis management. As warfare accelerates to "machine speed," human decision-making becomes severely compressed, reducing opportunities for crisis mitigation and diplomatic intervention.

7. Humans may overly trust AI-generated recommendations from decision support systems, even if flawed or incomplete, resulting in automation bias. Critical military decisions might become overly reliant on machine outputs, causing commanders to overlook human intuition, context, or caution, potentially escalating conflicts unintentionally.

8. AI-enabled capabilities, driven by the allure of increased operational efficiency and the race for decisive advantage, could result in an increased propensity for use, thus lowering the threshold for armed conflict. In times of crisis, a low threshold for the use of force would be highly destabilizing.

Technical risks

9. Military applications of AI may entail technical vulnerabilities, including algorithmic bias, data poisoning, and susceptibility to cyber-attacks. Conflicts could erupt due to the malfunction or manipulation of early warning systems or data-poisoning attacks. AI capabilities often function as 'black boxes,' producing decisions lacking transparency or explainability, complicating validation and accountability. Such vulnerabilities can lead to unpredictable outcomes, system failures, and significant risks to operational integrity. AI capabilities tested in one environment with specific data sets may not perform reliably in completely different environments with more complicated dynamics.

Normative, Legal and Ethical Risks

10. The use of AI in the military domain poses ethical, normative, and legal challenges, particularly concerning compliance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL). The essence of IHL relies fundamentally on human judgment, discretion, and context-sensitive decision-making—qualities inherently difficult for AI systems to replicate. Delegating critical functions such as target selection and engagement, including lethal force decisions, to autonomous systems risks violating core IHL principles of distinction, proportionality, precautions in attack, and military necessity. AI systems that produce unpredictable, unreliable, or unexplainable outcomes further complicate adherence to IHL, potentially leading to unlawful or unintended harm.

11. Additionally, the absence of direct human decision-making or over-reliance on AI-driven decision support systems raises critical questions of accountability and responsibility, making attribution and liability in cases of illicit or wrongful acts extremely challenging. If something goes wrong, commanders might deflect responsibility onto AI, complicating legal accountability and potential war crimes investigations.

12. Ethical concerns further arise from delegating life-and-death decisions to autonomous systems, potentially diminishing compassion, moral reasoning, and human judgment, thus exacerbating the risk of unjustified violence and civilian casualties.

Proliferation & Global Security Risks

13. The proliferation of military AI technologies presents significant risks to international security. The spread of advanced AI capabilities, particularly autonomous weapons, risks initiating new arms races and destabilizing regional and global security environments. The ease of proliferation and potential acquisition by non-state actors further exacerbate these concerns.

Proposed International Response: Central Role of the UN Machinery

14. AI technologies are general-purpose, and their peaceful uses are integral to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). At the same time, the implications of AI in the military domain are cross-cutting and can significantly impact international peace and security, thus necessitating a coordinated international response.

15. Pakistan acknowledges the value of AI governance initiatives outside the UN but remains cognizant of their limitations, particularly regarding universal participation and formal multilateral legitimacy. While these initiatives can complement UN efforts by fostering dialogue and political will, pursuing them in isolation risks fragmentation. Therefore, discussions on military applications of AI should be brought within UN forums to ensure inclusivity, legitimacy, and a coherent global framework reflecting the interests of all states.

16. For these reasons, the UN must remain central to any international response. The UN disarmament machinery should play a central role in developing an international governance framework for military AI and preventing the fragmentation of the normative landscape. The scale and novelty of AI's military implications require a multifaceted, holistic multilateral response. The UN's universal membership uniquely positions it as the ideal forum where all states—both developed and developing—have a voice.

17. No single forum or instrument will suffice. A structured strategy utilizing multiple UN disarmament bodies is needed, with each forum addressing the issue from its unique angle and mandate, in a complementary manner. We propose leveraging all relevant fora—from the General Assembly and its First Committee to the UN Disarmament Commission (UNDC), the Conference on Disarmament (CD), and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). Such an approach would comprehensively address strategic, humanitarian, legal, and technical dimensions, avoiding gaps and redundancies. Each forum's work should inform the others, creating synergies towards the common goal of mitigating military AI risks while preserving the peaceful use of AI.

Conference on Disarmament (CD)

18. The CD should prioritize addressing the strategic risks associated with military AI, particularly in the nuclear domain, aligning directly with its agenda items 1 and 2 *("Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament" and "Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters").* In 2023, Pakistan proposed establishing a new agenda item in the CD on this subject (*CD/2397*).

19. Under this new agenda item, the CD should establish a subsidiary body or an Ad hoc group, specifically mandated to examine stability-related risks of military AI, assess how it contribute to nuclear risks and pursue negotiations on concrete measures. These measures could include, inter alia:

- Making a commitment of maintaining human control and not replacing human judgment in decisions regarding nuclear weapons employment,
- Prohibition on using AI capabilities to manipulate data or target NC3 systems, and,
- Developing restraint measures on deployment and use of certain AI-capabilities, which can initiate pre-emptive strikes and contribute to escalatory nuclear risks.

20. The CD is uniquely suited for these discussions, bringing all militarily significant states together on an equal footing and operating by consensus, thereby safeguarding all states' vital security interests. Addressing this issue could revitalize the CD's work, demonstrating responsiveness to new and emerging threats.

UN Disarmament Commission (UNDC)

21. With its universal membership and deliberative mandate, the UNDC is ideally positioned to develop practical guidelines and recommendations on the responsible military use of AI. Historically, the UNDC has effectively developed similar guidelines (e.g., confidence-building measures in 1988 and regional approaches to disarmament in 1993).

22. Within Working Group II, the UNDC could develop guidelines and recommendations on confidence and security-building measures related to military AI applications at both global and regional levels. Key elements may include reaffirming normative foundations, recommending operational and technical risk mitigation measures, developing military AI risk reduction strategies, and addressing proliferation concerns while ensuring equitable access to peaceful AI uses.

UN General Assembly (UNGA) First Committee

23. The UNGA First Committee should institutionalize regular assessment reports by the UN Secretary General and maintain a catalogue of technological development of military AI capabilities and associated risks based on voluntary information shared by the Member States. These periodic assessments would provide authoritative insights into evolving capabilities, offering timely information and facilitating informed international policy responses.

24. The First Committee, in reviewing such reports, could hold dedicated debates on AI and possibly establish an open-ended working group under the General Assembly, if needed to negotiate for a more institutional platform e.g. a UN Register on military applications of AI (*though for now leveraging existing fora remains preferable*).

25. These reports could also identify areas where consensus is emerging or further work is needed, guiding agendas of forums like the CD, UNDC, and CCW.

Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW)

26. The CCW Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) remains essential for addressing humanitarian, ethical, and legal implications of Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems (LAWS). Its inclusive nature (engaging civil society and the ICRC as observers) is an asset.

27 Pakistan values the work accomplished by the CCW GGE since 2017, notably the 11 Guiding Principles established in 2019. However, CCW progress has been slow and largely principle-based rather than focused on concrete regulations. Pakistan agrees with assessments that CCW discussions have given "insufficient and declining attention" to the security dimensions of AI-enabled weapons, highlighting the need for complementary actions in the CD and other fora. Nonetheless, on the humanitarian front, the CCW GGE should continue and intensify its work.

28. Pakistan advocates concluding negotiations on a legally binding CCW protocol prohibiting LAWS operating without human control or incapable of complying with International Humanitarian Law (IHL). The current GGE mandate allows Member States to develop elements of such an instrument for presentation at the 2026 CCW Review Conference, potentially initiating formal negotiations thereafter.

Conclusion

29. Pakistan emphasizes the need for coordinated, inclusive international action to mitigate substantial military AI risks. It envisions a governance approach balancing security and development, ensuring stability while enabling beneficial AI development. Through a structured, multi-forum strategy within the UN, the international community can establish robust normative guardrails, uphold international security, and preserve equitable, non-discriminatory access to AI's peaceful uses.

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