

Working paper submitted by Japan to the United Nations
on Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the military domain
and its implications for international peace and security

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Resolution A/RES/79/239 adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2024 requests the Secretary-General to seek the views of Member States and observer States on the opportunities and challenges posed to international peace and security by the application of artificial intelligence (AI) in the military domain, with specific focus on areas other than lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS), and to submit a substantive report summarizing those views and cataloguing existing and emerging normative proposals, with an annex containing these views, to the General Assembly at its eightieth session for further discussion by States. Japan submits its views on this subject as follows for the purpose of contributing to the preparation of the report and to the furthering of the discussion on this topic.

I. General views

1. Japan is committed to maintaining and strengthening a free and open international order based on the rule of law so that all people can enjoy peace, stability, and prosperity, and to promoting diplomacy to realize a safe and secure world where human dignity is protected. In line with these goals, Japan has actively engaged in efforts to enhance international peace and security as well as arms control and disarmament.
2. Japan is of the view that AI application in the military domain should be examined in a comprehensive manner, with a sufficient understanding of its risks and benefits, and taking into account both humanitarian considerations and security perspectives. It is useful to deepen understanding on AI application in the military domain, and to promote realistic and practical efforts toward its responsible use in order to maximize its benefits while reducing its risks.
3. Regarding AI application in the military domain, Japan supports the view that 1) existing international law applies to matters governed by it that occur throughout the life cycle of AI, 2) AI capabilities should be applied in a responsible manner, and 3) humans remain responsible and accountable for their use and effects. Japan also emphasizes the need for enhanced transparency as an important confidence-building measure for maximizing benefits while reducing risks.

II. Japan's views and approach regarding opportunities and challenges posed to international peace and security by AI application in the military domain

1. Opportunities

- (a) Views

Rapid advances in science and technology, including AI, are fundamentally changing the paradigm of security. Countries are striving to develop cutting-edge technologies that could dramatically alter the character of warfare and thus prove to become “game changers”, and it has become extremely difficult in practice to distinguish between technologies for civilian use and those for security purposes. AI holds extraordinary potential to transform every aspect of military affairs, including military operations, command and control, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) activities, training, information management, and logistical support. Considering various usage of AI in the military domain, AI application may bring benefits such as improvement of precision, accuracy and efficiency, enhanced situational awareness and understanding, facilitation of rapid information analysis, reduction of human errors, and labor-saving. Its proper application could contribute to better protection of civilians in conflicts and post-conflict peacebuilding.

(b) Japanese approach toward utilization of “opportunities”

In AI application in the military domain, it is necessary to consider whether AI application is effective in overcoming the issues identified by humans, while keeping in mind the functions and limitations of AI. AI application itself should not be the goal, and the application should not be considered without considering its functions and limitations. Therefore, States should ensure that military AI capabilities have explicit, well-defined uses and that they are designed and engineered to fulfill those intended functions. With this in mind, it is important to foster a common international understanding of AI and its functions and limitations in the military domain, as well as a common understanding of the potential AI application in the military domain. As for AI application by the defense authorities, the Ministry of Defense of Japan published the “Ministry of Defense Basic Policy on Promoting the Utilization of AI” in July 2024, which set out its current thoughts on the functions and limitations of AI in the military domain and the areas for AI application it prioritizes. In the “Basic Policy”, in light of current capabilities and limitations of AI, the Ministry of Defense has identified the following seven fields in which it focuses on AI application.

- A) Detection and identification of targets
- B) Intelligence collection and analysis
- C) Command and Control
- D) Logistics support operations
- E) Unmanned assets
- F) Cyber security
- G) More efficient administrative works

The “Basic Policy” also indicates that it is necessary to keep in mind that AI is applied to support human decision making, and that human involvement is essential when applying AI.

2. Challenges

(a) Views

AI application in the military domain can present risks of misuse or malicious use, and of escalation and lowering the threshold of conflict, which may originate from bias, unintended consequences, and others. In this regard, Japan stresses the need to prevent AI from being used to contribute to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction by States and non-State actors, and emphasizes that AI should support, not hinder, disarmament, arms control, and non-proliferation efforts.

(b) Japanese approach toward addressing “challenges”

In light of risks such as bias, misuse, and malicious use, the Ministry of Defense of Japan will work to reduce the risks posed by AI, taking as a reference the concepts of 1) human-centric, 2) safety, 3) fairness, 4) privacy protection, 5) ensuring security, 6) transparency, and 7) accountability, as set out in the “AI Guidelines for Business” in Japan published in April 2024, while also paying attention to discussions in the international community and with defense authorities of other countries.

In addition, Japan is closely following the possible impact of emerging technologies such as AI on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. In this regard, Japan welcomes the commitment made by the United States, the United Kingdom, and France at the 2022 NPT Review Conference to maintain human control and involvement for all actions critical to informing and executing sovereign decisions concerning nuclear weapons employment and calls on other nuclear-weapon States to follow suit. Furthermore, the International Group of Eminent Persons for a World without Nuclear Weapons (IGEP¹) in its recommendation to the 2026 NPT Review Conference stressed the need to work together to address challenges and opportunities associated with emerging technologies.

III. Views on the future of discussions and international cooperation

1. A flexible, balanced, and realistic approach is necessary for the governance of AI in the military domain to keep pace with the rapid development and advancement of technologies. Japan stresses that efforts for responsible AI in the military domain can be taken in parallel with, and do not hamper, efforts for research, development, experimentation, and innovation in AI technology.

¹ The IGEP was established in which participants from both nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States, as well as those from countries participating and not participating in the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, to exchange ideas and thoughts beyond their respective national positions and engage in candid discussions concerning a concrete path towards the realization of a world without nuclear weapons. Since the first meeting in December 2022, six meetings have been organized and the recommendations for the 2026 NPT Review Conference was issued in the sixth meeting held on March 30 and 31.

It should be noted that discussions problematizing specific AI technology may lead to a hindrance of technological development and innovation in the civilian sector, with the possibility of producing a chilling effect. Furthermore, AI application in the military domain should be discussed in an inclusive manner with involvement of and exchange among stakeholders.

2. In light of the above considerations, Japan strongly supports the outcomes of the “Responsible Artificial Intelligence in the Military Domain (REAIM)” summits and the “Political Declaration on Responsible Military Use of Artificial Intelligence and Autonomy” and expects more States to join these initiatives.

As for LAWS, it should be noted that Japan strongly supports the continuation of the discussions under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and expects that the discussions on AI application in the military domain will complement and strengthen discussions in the LAWS GGE under the CCW.

3. Japan recognizes that transparency in AI application in the military domain is important as a confidence-building measure leading to risk reduction as well as effective collaboration and cooperation among countries. Japan also recognizes the importance of capacity building to facilitate the responsible approach in the development, deployment, and use of AI in the military domain, and commits to strengthening international cooperation on capacity building aimed at reducing the knowledge gap regarding such an approach. In this regard, methods such as the exchange of good practices and lessons learned will be useful, and Japan will make use of opportunities to exchange views with other countries.
4. Finally, regarding AI application in the military domain, Japan will continue to actively and constructively participate in international discussions with the aim of achieving a common understanding in the international community through balanced discussions that take into account humanitarian considerations and security perspectives.