Security Council

Background Paper

Committee: Security Council

Topic A: Artificial Intelligence in Military & Nuclear Decision-Making

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One of the most significant changes in modern international security is the rise of artificial intelligence. Its rapid progress is transforming the way nations manage surveillance, defense planning, and even nuclear strategy. While these technologies can greatly improve accuracy, reaction time, and overall efficiency, their use in military and nuclear contexts raises serious ethical and strategic dilemmas. Giving machines the ability to influence or even decide matters of life and death introduces risks that humanity has never faced before. For this reason, the global community must act quickly to ensure that the potential advantages of AI do not come at the cost of safety and human control.

In recent years, major world powers like China, Russia, and the United States have heavily invested in artificial intelligence for military and defense purposes. These developments include predictive targeting systems, autonomous drones, and algorithms designed to assist in nuclear command and control. The main goal behind these innovations is to improve national security by minimizing human error and increasing efficiency. However, by reducing human oversight in critical decisions, AI systems also introduce new dangers. A single technical failure,

misread data, or cyberattack especially when nuclear weapons are involved could trigger a global disaster that cannot be undone.

The application of AI to nuclear command and control systems is another significant worry. In an effort to enhance decision-making under duress, some countries are investigating AI's capacity to process data more quickly than human analysts. However, history demonstrates the risks associated with automation in such delicate fields. In 1983, a false alarm in the Soviet Union's early-warning system nearly triggered a nuclear launch, showing how easily automated systems can lead to catastrophic mistakes. If artificial intelligence were ever to misread satellite data or be hacked, the consequences could be far worse. For this reason, human judgment must remain central to all nuclear decision-making to prevent accidental escalation.

Another factor contributing to global instability is the lack of international regulation on military AI. Because there are no binding treaties to govern its development or use, major powers are already competing in an AI arms race. This competition heightens global tensions and increases the risk of creating technologies that are poorly tested or dangerously autonomous. To address these challenges, the United Nations Security Council must promote transparency, cooperation, and strong ethical standards in the use of AI for defense purposes.

To guide future debate, delegates should consider several key questions: How can the UN ensure that human oversight is maintained in military and nuclear AI systems? Should international law be updated to regulate autonomous weapons? And how can nations work together to prevent an AI-driven arms race among major powers? Answering these questions is essential for maintaining peace and preventing the misuse of emerging technologies in warfare.

While artificial intelligence has great potential to strengthen global security, it also poses serious risks to international stability if not guided by strong ethical standards and transparent accountability. The Security Council has the duty and the chance to take the lead in creating global standards that strike a balance between innovation and public safety. The future of peace and security in the twenty-first century will depend on ensuring that AI is controlled by humans and does not take the place of human judgment.

Key Issues

- The rise of artificial intelligence is transforming surveillance, defense, and nuclear strategy, improving efficiency but creating serious ethical and strategic dilemmas.
- Major powers like China, Russia, and the United States are developing military AI systems that could reduce human oversight and increase the risk of catastrophic errors.
- The use of AI in nuclear command and control could lead to dangerous automation mistakes or cyberattacks.
- The lack of international regulation is causing an AI arms race that threatens global stability.

Guiding Questions

- How can the UN ensure that human oversight is maintained in military and nuclear AI systems?
- Should international law be updated to regulate autonomous weapons?
- How can nations work together to prevent an AI-driven arms race among major powers?

Key Timeline

- 1945: Use of nuclear weapons in Japan reveals the destructive potential of advanced technology.
- 1983: Soviet false alarm nearly triggers a nuclear launch, exposing risks of automation.
- 2015: Over a thousand scientists, including Elon Musk and Stephen Hawking, warn against autonomous weapons.

- 2018: The UN begins formal talks on lethal autonomous weapons.
- 2021: The U.S. and China release national AI defense strategies, intensifying global competition.
- 2025 (simulation): An AI malfunction triggers a false nuclear alert, prompting an emergency UN Security Council session.

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