Artificial Intelligence and Modern Warfare: Strategic Stability and the Changing Global Balance of Power

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Abstract

Artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping warfare and the global balance of power. This paper argues that AI's strategic consequences are determined by socio-political and cognitive contexts, rather than technological determinism. It examines AI's transformation of intelligence, command and control, and autonomous weapons, alongside the weaponisation of information. Analysing national approaches, including the US, China, Russia, India, and Ukraine, it demonstrates how divergent innovation ecosystems shape AI integration. Critically, the paper highlights risks such as automation bias, algorithmic opacity, and compressed decision timelines that threaten strategic stability and increase the likelihood of inadvertent escalation. The paper concludes that managing military AI requires robust international governance, responsible norms, and ensuring meaningful human control over lethal decisions.

Keywords: artificial intelligence (AI), modern warfare, balance of power, strategic stability, great power competition, automation bias, lethal autonomous weapons (LAWS), escalation risk

Introduction

The rapid proliferation of artificial intelligence (AI) has captured the global imagination, transitioning from the realm of science fiction to a tangible force reshaping economies,

societies, and, therefore, international relations.[1] Major powers have declared AI a strategic priority, with leaders in the United States, China, and Russia identifying it as a technology that will determine future global leadership.[2] This intense focus stems from AI's potential as a transformative general-purpose technology, much like electricity or the internet, capable of being integrated across nearly every domain of human activity.[3] For scholars and practitioners of international relations, the central question is how this technological upheaval will alter the foundational dynamics of global order: war and peace.[4]

Before discussing how AI is fundamentally altering warfare, the balance of power, and thus international relations, it is important to understand what AI actually is. Artificial intelligence is best understood not as a single technology but as a broad collection of computational techniques designed to enable machines to perform tasks that normally require human intelligence.[5] Definitions from governmental bodies such as the U.S. Department of Defense and the European Union emphasise AI's capacity for learning, reasoning, pattern

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[1] Stephane J Baele et al., 'AI IR: Charting International Relations in the Age of Artificial Intelligence', *International Studies Review* (Vol. 26, No. 2, June 2024), p. 3; Valerie Sticher, 'War and Peace in the Age of AI', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* (Vol. 27, No. 2, 7 November 2024), p. 1.

[2] James A Greene, *National Security and Artificial Intelligence*, 1st edition (New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 2023), p. 188; James Johnson, 'The End of Military-Techno Pax Americana? Washington's Strategic Responses to Chinese AI-Enabled Military Technology', *Pacific Review* (Vol. 34, No. 3, 2021), p. 356.

[3] Amandeep S Gill, 'Artificial Intelligence and International Security: The Long View', *Ethics & International Affairs* (Vol. 33, No. 02, 7 June 2019), p. 172; Anupama Vijayakumar, 'Potential Impact of Artificial Intelligence on the Emerging World Order', *F1000Research* (Vol. 11, 30 October 2023), pp. 3–4.

[4] Sticher, 'War and Peace in the Age of AI', p. 545.

[5] Greene, *National Security and Artificial Intelligence*, p. 189; Christina Meleouni and Iris P Efthymiou, 'Artificial Intelligence and its Impact in International Relations', *Journal of Politics and Ethics in New Technologies and AI* (Vol. 2, No. 1, 5 November 2023), pp. 1–2.

recognition, and acting with varying degrees of autonomy to achieve human-defined objectives.[6] Current applications fall into the category of "Narrow AI," which excels at specific, pre-defined tasks, as opposed to the more speculative "Artificial General Intelligence" (AGI) that would possess human-level cognitive abilities across diverse domains.[7] Even within the confines of Narrow AI, the use of machine learning, algorithms that improve their performance through experience with large datasets, has enabled revolutionary advances in military and strategic affairs.

The study of international relations is fundamentally concerned with the global organisation of political authority and the distribution of power that underpins it.[8] Historically, technological shifts have served as powerful catalysts for systemic change, altering the balance of power and enabling the rise and fall of great powers.[9] This paper argues that while AI is revolutionising the tactical and operational character of warfare, its ultimate impact on the global balance of power is not pre-ordained by the technology itself. Instead, AI's strategic consequences are mediated by socio-political contexts, human-machine integration, and the risk of unintended escalation. This paper will first explore how AI is transforming the nature of warfare. Second, it will analyse AI's role in reshaping the balance of power, with a focus on the intensifying competition between the United States and

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[6] James Johnson, *Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Warfare: The USA, China, and Strategic Stability*, 1st edition (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021), p. 20; Wilson Wong, 'Trends in Political Science Research: Artificial Intelligence and Voter Disinformation', *International Political Science Abstracts* (Vol. 75, No. 2, 28 April 2025), p. 206.

[7] Greene, *National Security and Artificial Intelligence*, p. 189; Johnson, *Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Warfare*, p. 18.

[8] Christian Reus-Smit, *International Relations: A Very Short Introduction*, 1st edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

[9] Vijayakumar, 'Potential Impact of Artificial Intelligence', p. 5.

China. Third, it will present a comparative analysis of key national defence AI strategies. Fourth, it will examine the critical human and institutional factors that mediate AI's impact, creating new pathways to instability. Finally, it concludes by underscoring the urgent need for global governance to manage a future defined by AI-driven uncertainty.

The Transformation of Warfare

The integration of AI is fundamentally altering the character of modern warfare, even if its full impact remains a subject of debate. This transformation is unfolding across multiple domains, from intelligence analysis and command and control to the automation of lethal force, changing the speed, scale, and even the cognitive dimensions of conflict.[10] While some analysts foresee a complete revolution in military affairs, others point to a more incremental, albeit consequential, evolution.[11]

ISR and Command & Control

A primary impact of AI is its ability to process vast quantities of data at superhuman speeds, revolutionising Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR). Militaries operate thousands of drones generating immense volumes of footage, far exceeding the capacity of human analysts.[12] AI-powered systems such as the U.S. Project Maven use computer vision to automatically detect, classify, and track objects of interest, freeing human analysts for higher-level cognitive tasks and dramatically accelerating the "sensor-to-shooter" cycle.[13] This enhancement of situational awareness is a central component of emerging warfighting

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[10] Johnson, 'The End of Military-Techno Pax Americana?', p. 359; Reus-Smit, *International Relations*.

[11] Greene, *National Security and Artificial Intelligence*, p. 226; Sticher, 'War and Peace in the Age of AI', pp. 544–45.

[12] Greene, *National Security and Artificial Intelligence*, p. 217.

[13] Steven Feldstein, 'The Consequences of Generative AI for Democracy, Governance and War', *Survival* (Vol. 65, No. 5, 29 September 2023), p. 127; Greene, *National Security and Artificial Intelligence*, p. 198.

concepts such as the U.S. military's Joint All-Domain Command and Control (JADC2), which aims to create a unified network of sensors and weapons powered by AI to produce a common operating picture. China is pursuing similar capabilities through its concept of "intelligentized warfare," which seeks to achieve information dominance by integrating AI into a "system-of-systems" for rapid, network-centric decision-making.[14] The conflict in Ukraine has served as a real-world testbed, where AI-powered software consolidates data streams from commercial satellites, thermal imaging, and other intelligence to assist commanders in selecting targets for artillery and drone strikes, demonstrating the tangible battlefield advantages of these systems.[15]

Autonomous Weapons and Lethal Force

Beyond data analysis, AI enables greater autonomy in weapon systems. This ranges from semi-autonomous platforms that follow human commands to the prospective development of Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems (LAWS) capable of selecting and engaging targets without direct human intervention.[16] As mentioned before, the war in Ukraine has served as a "living laboratory" for such technologies, with both sides deploying loitering munitions that can operate with a degree of autonomy to find and strike targets. This trend pushes warfare towards machine speeds, creating scenarios where the tempo of combat may exceed human comprehension and control.[17] The development of swarm technologies, where large numbers

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[14] Heiko Borchert, Torben Schütz and Joseph Verbovszky, *The Very Long Game: 25 Case Studies on the Global State of Defense AI*, 1st edition (Cham: Springer Nature, 2024), pp. 53, 468.

[15] Raluca Csernatoni et al., 'Myth, Power, and Agency: Rethinking Artificial Intelligence, Geopolitics and War', *Minds and Machines* (Vol. 35, No. 3, 11 August 2025), p. 5; Feldstein, 'The Consequences of Generative AI', p. 127.

[16] Gill, 'Artificial Intelligence and International Security', p. 171; Greene, *National Security and Artificial Intelligence*, p. 203.

[17] Johnson, *Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Warfare*, p. 203.

of autonomous systems coordinate to overwhelm defences, further exemplifies this shift, potentially challenging the viability of small numbers of expensive, high-tech platforms.[18]

The pursuit of LAWS, however, is fraught with significant technical, ethical, and legal challenges. Technically, current AI systems are brittle and suffer from the "black box" problem, where their decision-making processes are opaque, making it difficult to verify their reliability in complex, adversarial environments.[19] Ethically and legally, LAWS raise profound questions about accountability and compliance with international humanitarian law principles such as distinction and proportionality, which presuppose human judgement.[20] These concerns have fuelled ongoing debates at the UN Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), though a global consensus on regulation or prohibition remains elusive.[21] States have adopted divergent positions; for instance, Russia officially acknowledges the need for human control but simultaneously argues against legally binding restrictions that could hinder its competitiveness in the global AI race.[22]

Information and Cognitive Warfare

Furthermore, the rise of generative AI has weaponised the information domain itself, blurring the lines between war and peace. AI enables the creation of highly realistic deepfakes and the mass production of tailored disinformation, capable of eroding public trust, manipulating elections, and undermining social cohesion.[23] These tools of cognitive warfare allow states

[18] Gill, 'Artificial Intelligence and International Security', p. 174.

[19] Johnson, *Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Warfare*, pp. 21, 25, 31.

[20] Gill, 'Artificial Intelligence and International Security', p. 177.

[21] Greene, *National Security and Artificial Intelligence*, pp. 195, 215.

[22] Borchert et al., *The Very Long Game*, p. 355.

[23] Feldstein, 'The Consequences of Generative AI', p. 121; Wong, 'Trends in Political Science Research', pp. 206–08.

and non-state actors to conduct sophisticated influence operations at an unprecedented scale, targeting the psychological vulnerabilities of an adversary's population.[24] This represents a profound shift, where the battlefield extends into the minds of citizens and the integrity of democratic processes becomes a primary target.[25]

It is crucial, however, to temper the hype of an imminent AI revolution with the reality of incremental change. The integration of AI faces significant technical, bureaucratic, and cultural hurdles, including data quality issues, algorithmic brittleness, and institutional resistance to change within established militaries.[26] The conflict in Ukraine, while showcasing new technologies, has also reaffirmed the enduring importance of conventional military capabilities and industrial capacity.[27] Thus, AI is not yet replacing traditional warfare but is augmenting it, creating hybrid forms of conflict where human soldiers are teamed with intelligent machines.[28] Even this incremental transformation is having profound consequences for how wars are fought and, by extension, for the distribution of power.

AI and the Shifting Balance of Power

The concept of the balance of power, i.e. the idea that states act to prevent any single state from achieving hegemony, is a cornerstone of international relations theory.[29] Historically,

[24] Baele et al., 'AI IR', pp. 14–15.

[25] Wong, 'Trends in Political Science Research', pp. 206–07, 210–11.

[26] Borchert et al., *The Very Long Game*, p. 39; Johnson, *Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Warfare*, pp. 21, 23, 31.

[27] Sticher, 'War and Peace in the Age of AI', p. 544.

[28] Karina Vold, 'Human-AI Cognitive Teaming: Using AI to Support State-Level Decision Making on the Resort to Force', *Australian Journal of International Affairs* (Vol. 78, No. 2, 31 May 2024), pp. 230–31.

[29] John Baylis, Steve Smith and Patricia Owens, *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, 9th edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), p. 10; Karen A Mingst, Heather E

disruptive technologies have often been the catalyst for major shifts in this balance, enabling rising powers to challenge the established order.[30] Today, AI is widely viewed as the central arena for a new era of great power competition, one that is reshaping the global distribution of power and reviving fears of strategic instability.

This competition is most pronounced between the United States and China. Both nations have identified AI leadership as a vital national interest, essential for future economic prosperity and military dominance.[31] China's 2017 "New Generation AI Development Plan" and its doctrine of "military-civil fusion" (MCF) represent a whole-of-nation effort to establish itself as the world's premier AI power by 2030.[32] This strategy leverages the vast data resources of its population and the close integration of its civilian tech giants with the state to accelerate the development of "intelligentized warfare" capabilities.[33] The United States, in turn, has responded to China's rise as a "pacing challenge," launching initiatives such as the Chief Digital and Artificial Intelligence Office (CDAO) and the Replicator Initiative to accelerate its own adoption of AI and maintain its technological edge.[34] This

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McKibben and Ivan M Arreguín-Toft, *Essentials of International Relations*, 8th edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2019), p. 32.

[30] Vijayakumar, 'Potential Impact of Artificial Intelligence', p. 5.

[31] Greene, *National Security and Artificial Intelligence*, p. 188; Johnson, 'The End of Military-Techno Pax Americana?', pp. 351, 356.

[32] *Ibid*., pp. 467, 471.

[33] Borchert et al., *The Very Long Game*., pp. 466, 471; Johnson, *Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Warfare*, pp. 62, 65.

[34] Borchert et al., *The Very Long Game*, pp. 40–41; Johnson, 'The End of Military-Techno Pax Americana?', pp. 356, 358.

dynamic has been described as a "Sputnik Moment" for the U.S., fuelling a technological rivalry that has been compared to the Cold War arms race.[35]

Central to this competition is the pursuit of a "first-mover advantage." This is the belief that the first nation to master military AI could gain a decisive and potentially insurmountable strategic edge, thereby tempting aggression.[36] A breakthrough in AI could, in theory, enable a state to neutralise an adversary's defences, disrupt its command and control, and achieve a swift victory. The fear of being left behind creates immense pressure to accelerate AI development, potentially at the expense of safety and stability.[37] However, the likelihood of a durable first-mover advantage is contested. Unlike nuclear technology, AI is predominantly software-based, dual-use, and driven by a globalised commercial sector, which promotes rapid diffusion.[38] Being a fast-follower that effectively integrates and adapts existing technology may prove more important than being the first to innovate.[39]

This tension between concentration and diffusion complicates predictions about the future structure of the international system. While the intense U.S.-China rivalry points

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[35] Johnson, 'The End of Military-Techno Pax Americana?', p. 359; Vijayakumar, 'Potential Impact of Artificial Intelligence', p. 13.

[36] Zachary Burdette et al., 'Six Ways AI Could Cause the Next Big War, and Why it Probably Won't', *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* (Vol. 81, No. 4, 15 July 2025), pp. 305–06; Nori Katagiri, 'Artificial Intelligence and Cross-Domain Warfare: Balance of Power and Unintended Escalation', *Global Society* (Vol. 38, No. 1, 27 August 2023), p. 40.

[37] Johnson, *Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Warfare*, p. 176.

[38] Gill, 'Artificial Intelligence and International Security', pp. 171, 174; Johnson, *Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Warfare*, p. 207; Johnson, 'The End of Military-Techno Pax Americana?', p. 366.

[39] Burdette et al., 'Six Ways AI Could Cause the Next Big War', p. 307.

toward a new bipolar order, the proliferation of AI could foster a more multipolar world.[40] Other powers are actively pursuing their own defence AI strategies. Russia, for instance, focuses on asymmetric applications and upgrading legacy systems to compensate for conventional weaknesses.[41] India leverages its strong IT talent pool and international partnerships with countries such as Israel and the U.S. to pursue a pragmatic modernisation agenda focused on strategic autonomy.[42] The accessibility of open-source models and commercial AI tools could also empower technically advanced middle powers and even non-state actors, giving them disruptive capabilities that were once the sole preserve of great powers.[43] Thus, AI is not merely reinforcing a bipolar contest but is introducing a more complex and unpredictable distribution of power, where influence is wielded not only through military hardware but also through algorithmic superiority and control over data.

A Comparative Study of National Defence AI Strategies

A comparative analysis of how nations are integrating AI into their defence programmes reveals that there is no monolithic approach. National strategies are conditioned by each state's unique geopolitical position, innovation ecosystem, and available resources. The approaches of the United States, China, Russia, India, and Ukraine illustrate this diversity.

Strategic Perception and Core Drivers

[40] Ingvild Bode, 'AI Technologies and International Relations: Do We Need New Analytical Frameworks?', *RUSI Journal* (Vol. 169, No. 5, 29 August 2024), p. 74; Johnson, 'The End of Military-Techno Pax Americana?', pp. 352, 366.

[41] *Ibid*., pp. 356, 367–68.

[42] Borchert et al., *The Very Long Game*, pp. 446, 450–51.

[43] Feldstein, 'The Consequences of Generative AI', p. 125; Gill, 'Artificial Intelligence and International Security', p. 172.

The primary drivers behind defence AI adoption differ starkly. For instance, the United States and China are locked in a bipolar competition where AI is viewed as fundamental to global leadership. The U.S. National Defense Strategy frames China as the "pacing challenge," and AI is seen as a critical tool to maintain its military edge by leveraging its world-leading commercial tech sector. Conversely, China's policy documents describe AI as a historic opportunity to achieve a strategic advantage, employing a state-guided "military-civil fusion" (MCF) model to direct its dynamic civilian economy toward its goal of becoming a world-class military on par with the U.S. by mid-century.[44]

In contrast, Russia's approach, driven by a need to compensate for conventional military weaknesses, distinguishes between automation and "intellectualisation," or integrating true machine learning and artificial intelligence technologies.[45] It pursues asymmetric capabilities, such as electronic warfare and autonomous systems, to challenge a technologically superior West; a strategy intensified by its experiences in Ukraine. India, under its "Make in India" policy, embodies a more pragmatic approach. It seeks military modernisation to avoid being dominated by neighbours, but defence AI competes with a broader focus on economic development, forcing a reliance on international partnerships.[46] Finally, Ukraine's perception of AI is forged by war; its driver is immediate survival. Its decentralised, agile ecosystem, fuelled by volunteers and international support, excels at rapid, battlefield-driven innovation.[47]

Innovation Ecosystem and Implementation Challenges

[44] *Ibid*.

[45] *Ibid*., p. 354.

[46] *Ibid*., pp. 447, 450–51.

[47] *Ibid*., pp. 376, 385, 387.

The organisation of each nation's innovation ecosystem is a key differentiator. The United States benefits from a commercial-led, bottom-up model but is hampered by bureaucratic inertia. Its primary challenge is the institutional chasm that slows the transition of commercial technology into military capabilities, as exemplified by the cancellation of promising autonomous systems such as the X-47B drone despite its technical success.[48]

China employs a state-guided, MCF model that ensures close integration between tech companies, universities, and the military. However, its major implementation challenge is a critical dependence on foreign technology, especially high-end semiconductors, a vulnerability the U.S. is actively exploiting through stringent export controls.[49]

Russia operates a predominantly state-dominated, top-down model reliant on its traditional military-industrial complex. This approach is severely constrained by international sanctions, economic limitations, and a significant brain drain of tech talent, which hobble its ability to mass-produce sophisticated systems.[50]

India's ecosystem is more fragmented and partnership-reliant. It features a mix of state defence organisations and a growing but not fully integrated startup scene. Its progress is checked by insufficient state funding for defence AI, which constitutes a tiny fraction of its overall defence budget, and a lack of central coordination.[51]

Ukraine has demonstrated a remarkably decentralised and networked ecosystem born of necessity. It excels at rapid, iterative development but is limited by an existential shortage of resources and a deep dependence on the continued support of its international partners.[52]

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[48] *Ibid*., p. 44.

[49] *Ibid*., pp. 471, 474.

[50] *Ibid*., pp. 353–54, 360–63, 367.

[51] *Ibid*., pp. 447, 450–52.

[52] Borchert et al., *The Very Long Game*, pp. 376, 380, 384, 385, 390.

This comparative analysis demonstrates that a nation's success in leveraging AI for defence is not merely a technical race but a complex function of its strategic priorities and institutional agility.

The Human Factor: Cognition, Escalation, and Strategic Stability

This divergence in national approaches underscores that technology is not a deterministic force. Its strategic impact is realised at the intersection of machine capability and human decision-making. The integration of AI into military operations does not remove the human from the loop; instead, it creates complex "human-AI cognitive teams" fraught with new psychological risks and pathways to instability.[53]

Non-autonomous AI systems can offer significant cognitive enhancements, processing information and modelling outcomes to improve planning.[54] However, this partnership carries the well-documented risk of "automation bias," the tendency for human operators to over-trust and uncritically accept automated recommendations.[55] In high-pressure situations, commanders may defer to an AI's seemingly objective analysis, even if it is flawed, leading to a dangerous atrophy of critical human judgement and situational awareness.[56] This over-reliance can lead to decision failures, as operators become less vigilant and more willing to cede responsibility to the machine.

This is compounded by the "black box" nature of many advanced machine learning models. Their opaque reasoning processes make it difficult to verify their logic or identify

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[53] Csernatoni et al., 'Myth, Power, and Agency', p. 2; Vold, 'Human-AI Cognitive Teaming', pp. 230–31.

[54] Hamidreza Mostafaei et al., 'Applications of Artificial Intelligence in Global Diplomacy: A Review of Research and Practical Models', *Sustainable Futures* (Vol. 9, June 2025), p. 1; Vold, 'Human-AI Cognitive Teaming', pp. 229–30.

[55] Johnson, *Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Warfare*, p. 170.

[56] Vold, 'Human-AI Cognitive Teaming', p. 233.

hidden biases.[57] An AI system may also "hallucinate" and fabricate information that appears credible; a risk demonstrated in civilian contexts where AI has invented legal citations for court briefs.[58] In a military intelligence scenario, such a hallucination could lead a commander to act on entirely false information, with catastrophic consequences. The mythological aura surrounding AI, which frames it as a near-divine, hyper-rational force, can further obscure these limitations, leading to misplaced faith and a failure to critically interrogate its outputs.[59]

These cognitive vulnerabilities have profound implications for strategic stability, particularly in nuclear and cyber contexts. The speed of AI-enabled warfare dramatically compresses decision-making timelines, increasing the pressure on leaders and heightening the risk of accidental escalation.[60] The integration of AI into Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications (NC3) systems creates the potential for automated escalation, where a false positive from an AI-powered early warning system, misinterpreting a sensor glitch or a conventional attack as a nuclear launch, could trigger an irreversible, catastrophic response chain.[61] Moreover, AI systems may struggle to interpret the subtle, context-dependent human signalling crucial for de-escalation during a crisis, potentially misreading a limited action as a prelude to a full-scale attack.[62] As states increasingly rely on these brittle and unpredictable

[57] Johnson, *Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Warfare*, p. 25.

[58] Feldstein, 'The Consequences of Generative AI', p. 129.

[59] Csernatoni et al., 'Myth, Power, and Agency', pp. 3–4.

[60] Johnson, *Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Warfare*, pp. 179–80; Katagiri, 'Artificial Intelligence and Cross-Domain Warfare', pp. 37, 42.

[61] Burdette et al., 'Six Ways AI Could Cause the Next Big War', p. 308.

[62] Johnson, *Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Warfare*, p. 175.

systems, the potential for a conflict to spiral out of control due to machine error or human-machine misinterpretation becomes a central threat to international peace and security.[63]

Conclusion

Artificial intelligence is a present and transformative force in international relations, fundamentally altering warfare and fuelling a new era of great power competition. This paper has argued, however, that its ultimate impact on the global balance of power is not a simple function of technological prowess. The strategic consequences of AI are filtered through national priorities, institutional agility, and the complex, often fraught, integration of machine logic with human cognition.

While the U.S.-China rivalry suggests a move toward bipolarity, the diffusive nature of AI complicates this picture, potentially empowering a wider array of actors. More critically, the promise of hyper-rational, machine-driven decision-making is shadowed by the risks of automation bias, algorithmic opacity, and brittle systems that may fail catastrophically. By compressing decision timelines and struggling to interpret human intent, AI introduces new and dangerous pathways to inadvertent escalation, challenging the very foundations of strategic stability.

The challenge ahead, therefore, extends beyond technological development. The mythology of an inevitable AI-driven militarism, fuelled by geopolitical rivalry and corporate hype, risks obscuring the profound ethical and strategic choices that lie before the international community. Forging a stable future requires moving beyond a zero-sum competition and toward robust, cooperative governance. The risks of automated escalation and decision-making failures underscore the urgent need for international dialogue and policy action. Establishing clear norms for responsible military use, creating confidence-building

[63] Katagiri, 'Artificial Intelligence and Cross-Domain Warfare', p. 35.

measures to increase transparency, ensuring meaningful human control over lethal force, and developing channels for crisis communication are essential to manage the instabilities AI creates. As the history of arms control demonstrates, even in highly contested domains, consensus on risk reduction is possible. The most critical task for statecraft in the 21st century will be to ensure that these powerful tools serve to enhance security rather than leading humanity down a path of unintended and uncontrollable conflict.