

Northeast Texas Essay Contest – 2026

Artificial Intelligence in the Military: Strategic Enhancement or Serious Concern?

Repeatedly, humanity has been cautioned against the use of artificial intelligence in both reality and fiction. In the movie *WarGames*, the character Stephen Falken observes, “The whole point was to find a way to practice nuclear war without destroying ourselves. . . Except, I could never get Joshua [a form of military AI] to learn the most important lesson. . . Futility. There’s a time when you should just give up,” an observation which highlights the divide between people and machines. Humans possess a deep moral complexity and understanding regarding their behavior. AI, however, is only about data and objectives, and is completely devoid of conscience. When this system is placed in the environment of war, this lack of intrinsic morality can turn AI into a tool that pursues goals relentlessly, without pause, which can lead to mistakes, casualties, and cumulative loss. Therefore, AI should not be used in the military.

War is derived from the principle that one person, one country, one nation is so determined in its ideology that its citizens are willing to die at the hands of those who challenge it. Other alternatives are considered before war to avoid loss of life, but when AI becomes involved, it removes ethical considerations regarding human lives. Similar to the atomic bomb, AI seems safer and easier when used against others, but when weapons threaten mass annihilation and indiscriminate killing in the U.S., the government tends to reconsider the ethical concerns. The taking of any human life should not be a simple decision. Gould states that when AI becomes involved, “Responsibility becomes blurred: officers point to the technology, companies deny control, and governments deny its use” (qtd. in “Does”), leaving no one to take

accountability for someone's death. Relying on this kind of technology threatens human rights, accountability, and the world's stability.

Currently, AI weapons remain in the hands of militant operators. However, some advancements have left AI weapons able to complete tasks without human intervention, such as the “military-grade autonomous drones that can fly themselves to a specific location, pick their own targets and kill without the assistance of a remote human operator” (Hernandez). The ability for such technology presents many dangers, with a lack of situational awareness, morals, and problem-solving skills. One mistake could be catastrophic. It raises questions of situational dilemmas and how the AI would react in those situations. As any other tool, AI can be beneficial to the military. This technology can take on dangerous tasks such as bomb disposal, reconnaissance or mine detection which can reduce risks for human soldiers (Harper). However, the assumption that simply because it is a machine, it cannot make mistakes is what could lead to war. It’s a military grade, deadly weapon, and when in the wrong hands, could lead to world-scale security threats (“Pros”).

Overall, while an innovative and interesting concept, AI in the military provides great concerns to humanity’s safety, raising serious security, moral, ethical, and political questions that cannot be definitively answered. By removing human judgment in matters that involve life and death, AI reduces warfare to a set of calculated objectives rather than deep, monumentally consequential human choices. The complete absence of morals, empathy, and reasoning in autonomous systems makes irreversible harm much too easy to justify. Technology is made to serve humanity as a tool rather than endanger it, and by incorporating AI into modern warfare, it becomes a weapon of mass destruction that anyone can control.

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