
The Effects of Artificial Intelligence on Modern Warfare

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Abstract

Modern armed conflicts increasingly rely on technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), unmanned aerial vehicles (drones), and cyber attacks, which are transforming traditional paradigms of warfare. Research into the role of AI facilitates the development of automated decision-making systems, predictive threat analysis, and more efficient military operations management. The use of drones offers advantages in reconnaissance, targeting, and logistics, while cyber warfare enables attacks on critical infrastructures without direct physical confrontation, potentially causing significant security and economic damages. Studying these domains is essential for understanding new forms of conflict, improving defense strategies, and developing international legal and ethical frameworks. This paper emphasizes the need for continuous research to adapt security policies, advance technological innovations, and ensure stability within dynamic and complex modern warfare systems.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, armed conflicts, military operations, drones, cyber attacks

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) plays an increasingly significant role in modern armed conflicts, transforming the ways in which military operations are conducted and redefining the concept of security. Its importance is reflected through several areas of impact. Artificial intelligence enables the automation of numerous military tasks, such as reconnaissance, logistics, communication, and combat system management. AI-based systems can analyze vast amounts of data in real time, allowing for faster and more accurate decision-making. Additionally, drones and autonomous vehicles, guided by AI algorithms, are used for reconnaissance, surveillance, and even for carrying out precision strikes- often without direct human involvement. This reduces the risk to soldiers and increases the ability to conduct missions in inaccessible or high-risk areas (Osmonbekov et al., 2024). It is particularly important to highlight that artificial intelligence plays a key role in cybersecurity - not only in detecting and preventing cyberattacks but also in conducting information operations. AI algorithms can generate, disseminate, or detect disinformation, which significantly impacts the psychological dimension of conflict and public perception. Advanced AI systems are used for modeling conflict scenarios, assessing enemy strategies, and optimizing military plans. This enables the prediction of enemy moves and timely responses. On the other hand, it is important to emphasize that the use of AI in warfare raises serious questions concerning responsibility, ethics, and international law. Automated decision-making about life and death, without human oversight, sparks debates about the legitimacy and morality of such an approach (Lei, 2019).

Literature Review

Artificial Intelligence (AI) increasingly permeates all levels of military operations-from strategic planning, through operational force management, to tactical application on the battlefield. Its impact can be analyzed across three key levels of military decision-making and within specific functional areas (Zirojević, 2024):

1. Strategic Level – Making Long-term Decisions

At this highest level, AI assists in:

- Geopolitical analysis: using predictive analytics to assess risks, political tensions, and potential conflicts.
- Threat assessment: identifying growing military capabilities of other countries through the analysis of satellite imagery and open sources.
- War simulation and modeling: AI is used to generate conflict development scenarios and make optimal decisions with reduced uncertainty.
- Development of military doctrines: by analyzing historical data, AI can contribute to the creation of new warfare concepts (Rim, 2024; Malmio, 2023; Sehwat, 2017).

2. Operational Level – Planning and Managing Military Operations

At this level, AI influences:

- Command and Control: enabling more efficient information flow, command automation, and faster response times.
- Management of combat units: allocation of forces and resources in real time based on terrain analysis, weather conditions, and enemy movements.
- Prediction of enemy behavior: algorithms forecast the enemy's next steps based on previous patterns of action.
- Multi-domain coordination (land, air, sea, cyber, space): integration of information from multiple sources and domains for complex missions (Rim, 2024; Malmio, 2023; Sehwat, 2017).

3. Tactical Level – Immediate Combat Actions

At this level, AI is used for:

- Management of unmanned platforms (drones, robots): for reconnaissance, target detection, logistical support, or attacks.
- Target recognition and guidance: application of computer vision and machine learning for automatic identification and classification of objects.
- Electronic warfare and jamming: AI aids in analyzing the radio frequency spectrum and disrupting enemy signals.
- Assisting soldiers on the ground: through smart helmets, navigation, automatic translators, and real-time information assistants (Rim, 2024; Malmio, 2023; Sehwat, 2017).

4. The Use of Drones in Modern Armed Conflicts

A significant portion of this paper focuses on the role of drones in modern armed conflicts, highlighting their emergence as a crucial technology in contemporary warfare. Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), or drones, are widely utilized for their ability to conduct, surveillance, and precision strikes without exposing human pilots to danger. Their diverse applications include systematic intelligence gathering through high-resolution imaging and real-time monitoring of enemy movements, which improves situational awareness; precision targeting that minimizes collateral damage and civilian casualties; and conducting electronic warfare operations, such as jamming and disrupting enemy communication systems.

Additionally, drones support logistical operations by delivering supplies and serving as communication relays in contested areas, while also enhancing national security through border surveillance and patrol missions (Horowitz et al., 2020; Delleji et al., 2024).

5. Historical Evolution of Drone Technology

The development of drones traces back to the early 20th century, with initial prototypes emerging during World War I (circa 1916–1918) primarily for training purposes. During World War II and the Cold War, drones were utilized for reconnaissance missions and as aerial targets for anti-aircraft training. The technological advancements of the 1990s and early 2000s led to the creation of sophisticated platforms capable of extended flight durations, precise navigation, and armed engagement—exemplified by systems such as the MQ-1 Predator and MQ-9 Reaper.

Contemporary drones exhibit a wide range of capabilities, from compact, portable units to large-scale systems capable of deep penetration into hostile territory. The integration of artificial intelligence and autonomous control systems has further enhanced their operational autonomy and decision-making capabilities (Bogue, 2024).

6. Contemporary Utilization in Global Conflicts

In contemporary armed conflicts across the globe, drones have become a crucial component of military strategy, with various countries employing their capabilities in diverse operational contexts.

The United States, as a pioneer in the deployment of armed unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), has extensively utilized platforms such as the Predator and Reaper for targeted strikes against terrorist networks in Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, and Syria. Israel, renowned for its advanced drone technology, employs UAVs for both intelligence gathering and combat operations, particularly in engagements with Hamas and in the Syrian conflict. Russia deploys drones for reconnaissance and strike missions, especially in Ukraine and Syria, increasingly incorporating advanced technological systems into its operations. China continues to develop and operationalize drones in strategically significant regions such as the South China Sea, while also actively exporting UAV technology worldwide. Turkey has gained international recognition for its domestically produced combat drones, notably the Bayraktar TB2, which have been effectively employed in conflicts in Syria, Libya, and Nagorno-Karabakh. In the ongoing conflict with Russia, Ukraine makes extensive use of drones for reconnaissance and precision targeting, including the deployment of improvised UAVs adapted to battlefield conditions (Xu et al., 2024).

The evolution of drones from rudimentary unmanned targets to sophisticated platforms for intelligence and combat has profoundly transformed the nature of modern warfare. Their capacity to minimize human risk, deliver precision firepower, and provide timely and accurate information renders them indispensable in contemporary military strategy. Anticipated advancements in autonomy and artificial intelligence will likely expand the operational scope of drones, underscoring their strategic significance in future conflicts (Yaacoub et al., 2020).

Single UAVs (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles) refer to unmanned aircraft that operate independently and are commonly employed for tasks such as reconnaissance, surveillance, and intelligence gathering. In contrast, Multi-UAV systems involve the coordinated deployment of multiple drones functioning as a team—often autonomously or semi-autonomously—and communicating with one another to execute more

complex missions, such as synchronized attacks, electronic warfare, or wide-area reconnaissance. The key distinction lies in the collaborative capabilities and task distribution of Multi-UAV systems, which enhance operational efficiency, reduce vulnerability, and provide greater flexibility on the battlefield (Barros et al., 2024).

In contemporary armed conflicts, both single and multi-UAV systems play a critical role at the tactical level, enabling precise, rapid, and effective force application while minimizing risk to human personnel. Their use transforms the dynamics of ground operations, facilitates real-time decision-making, and offers strategic advantages in high-risk scenarios. Due to their growing significance in modern warfare, these systems will be a central focus of analysis in this research study (Figure 1). The rapid advancement of unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) technology has led to their widespread adoption in both civilian and military applications, including surveillance, environmental monitoring, disaster response, and tactical operations. To effectively coordinate and manage UAV missions, especially when multiple drones operate simultaneously, the establishment of robust communication networks is essential. These UAV communication networks enable real-time data exchange, command dissemination, and adaptive mission control. Depending on the operational requirements and environmental constraints, different network topologies may be employed—each offering distinct advantages and limitations. The most common configurations include star topology, mesh topology, and Flying Ad Hoc Networks (FANETs), which differ in terms of structure, communication flow, fault tolerance, and scalability. The following sections provide a comparative overview of these topologies and their practical implications for UAV-based operations (Barros et al., 2024; Bine et al., 2024).

Communication Network Topologies

1. Cyber Warfare and the Role of Artificial Intelligence

The paper also focuses on the connection between artificial intelligence and cyberattacks. Cyber warfare involves the use of digital attacks and techniques aimed at compromising, disabling, or manipulating the opponent's information and communication systems. The objectives of such operations can be military, political, economic, or intelligence-related (Bine et al., 2024; Majeed et al., 2023).

2. The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Cyber Attacks

Artificial intelligence (AI) plays an increasingly significant role in the landscape of cyber attacks, transforming both offensive and defensive strategies in cyberspace. On the offensive side, AI enables the automation of cyber attacks by rapidly identifying vulnerabilities within networks and software systems, thereby increasing both the speed and efficiency of such operations. Advanced forms of malware, including viruses and ransomware, are now designed to leverage AI in order to adapt to security defenses and evade detection mechanisms. Furthermore, AI facilitates the creation of fake digital content—such as deepfake videos, fabricated messages, and targeted disinformation campaigns—used to manipulate public opinion or undermine political and institutional credibility. In the realm of cyber espionage, AI aids in processing and analyzing large datasets to extract sensitive or strategic information. On the defensive front, AI is equally vital, as it supports the real-time detection and mitigation of cyber threats by automatically identifying and neutralizing attacks as they occur (Majeed et al., 2023; Manghnani & Mogh, 2025).

3. Examples of State-Sponsored Cyber Attacks

State-sponsored cyber attacks have emerged as a powerful instrument of geopolitical influence and asymmetric warfare, with numerous countries leveraging cyber capabilities to advance strategic objectives. The United States has been linked to the development of Stuxnet (2010), a highly sophisticated virus created in collaboration with Israel, which targeted Iran's nuclear infrastructure by sabotaging uranium enrichment centrifuges. Another major incident, the SolarWinds attack in 2020, involved the compromise of U.S. government and corporate networks and is widely attributed to Russian cyber operatives. Russia has conducted numerous cyber attacks on Ukraine since 2014, including assaults on critical infrastructure such as power grids, as well as engaging in election interference in the United States and other nations through hacking and disinformation campaigns. China's cyber strategy frequently targets the theft of intellectual property and sensitive government data, aiming to bolster its economic and technological development, while also using cyber operations against Tibetan and Taiwanese entities for political purposes. North Korea has employed cyber attacks for both political and financial gain, as exemplified by the 2014 Sony Pictures hack and a series of global ransomware campaigns designed to generate revenue. Iran, in turn, has launched cyber attacks against regional rivals, notably targeting Saudi oil facilities and Israeli systems, and has significantly advanced its cyber warfare capabilities in response to the Stuxnet operation (Burton, 2023; Davis & Bracken, 2025; Sule et al., 2023).

Cyber warfare has become a central element of modern conflicts and national security strategies. Artificial intelligence further enhances the efficiency and complexity of these operations by enabling automated, rapid, and adaptive attacks, as well as advanced defensive systems. While states invest heavily in developing these technologies, ethical considerations, legal frameworks, and international regulations remain among the greatest challenges in the field of cybersecurity.

A typical cyber attack via the internet involves several structured phases. Initially, the attacker gains access to the internet using their personal computer and a stable network connection. The next step involves identifying a specific target, such as a banking server, an electric power distribution management system, or the control unit of a fuel station (Figure 2). Once the target is defined, the attacker searches for potential vulnerabilities within the system, which may include unsecured ports, outdated software, weak authentication credentials, or application-level security flaws. Upon discovering such vulnerabilities, the attacker proceeds to exploit them using various techniques, including phishing, Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks, malware injection, or brute-force password attacks. Successful exploitation allows the attacker to infiltrate the system, at which point they may assume control, exfiltrate sensitive data, disrupt normal operations, or manipulate devices and critical infrastructure. The consequences of such attacks can be severe, encompassing financial losses, operational downtime, physical damage—such as explosions in the case of compromised fuel control systems—and a significant erosion of consumer trust and organizational credibility.

Example: Cyber Attack on a Fuel Station

In the case of a fuel station, a cyber attacker may infiltrate the pump's control system, such as a Programmable Logic Controller (PLC) or another type of industrial controller. Once inside, the attacker can manipulate the fuel dispensing process, alter fuel quantities, or bring operations to a complete halt.

Such interference may result in system malfunctions, service outages, or, in more severe cases, pose serious safety risks—particularly if the attacker gains control over critical safety mechanisms.

Conclusion

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) in modern armed conflicts is increasingly transforming the nature of warfare, with traditional battles being replaced by digital and automated tactics. Drones, as autonomous or remotely controlled aerial vehicles, are becoming pivotal in reconnaissance, combat, and logistical operations. On the other hand, cyber warfare represents a silent yet extremely dangerous form of conflict, capable of paralyzing entire nations without a single shot fired—through attacks on critical infrastructure such as power grids, financial systems, and communications. In the future, greater integration of AI is expected in the fields of automated decision-making, predictive threat analysis, and the management of complex military systems without direct human control. Trends indicate the development of so-called “smart warfare,” where autonomous platforms and cyber tools will play a key role on the front lines. This evolution carries serious ethical, legal, and security implications that require international regulation and careful consideration. Artificial intelligence will not merely serve as an auxiliary tool but potentially become a decisive factor in contemporary and future conflicts (Mathieu et al., 2025; Szwed, 2022; Al-Dekah, 2025; Tiwari et al., 2024).

Further research into the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) in the domains of cyberattacks and drone technology is of fundamental importance, given the increasing sophistication of threats and the growing autonomy of these systems. AI enables the automation of cyberattacks, pattern recognition, and decision-making without human intervention, significantly transforming the dynamics of contemporary security challenges. In the context of drones, AI facilitates precise reconnaissance, autonomous navigation, and the execution of targeted operations, thereby raising new ethical and legal concerns. Since AI can be employed both for defensive and offensive purposes, it is essential to thoroughly examine its potentials and risks in order to develop effective strategies for control, protection, and regulation—with particular emphasis on transparency, accountability, and international security (Waqar, 2024; Han et al., 2023; Makridis & Mishra, 2022).

In future research on the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in modern armed conflicts, particular attention should be directed toward issues of system autonomy and the ethical dilemmas associated with decisions to use force without human intervention. It is essential to examine how to ensure algorithmic transparency and explainability, as well as their resilience to cyber threats and manipulation. Additionally, it is important to consider how AI integrates into existing frameworks of international law and the implications for the laws of armed conflict.

Research focused on human-machine collaboration in military operations, the impact of AI on deterrence strategies, the psychology of military leadership, and shifts in military doctrines holds particular value. Given the increasing role of AI in shaping both tactical and strategic decision-making, this domain will undoubtedly become one of the key focal points in future academic research (Wagner et al., 2023; Fox, 2022).

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Appendix

Figure 1.

Types of Drones13

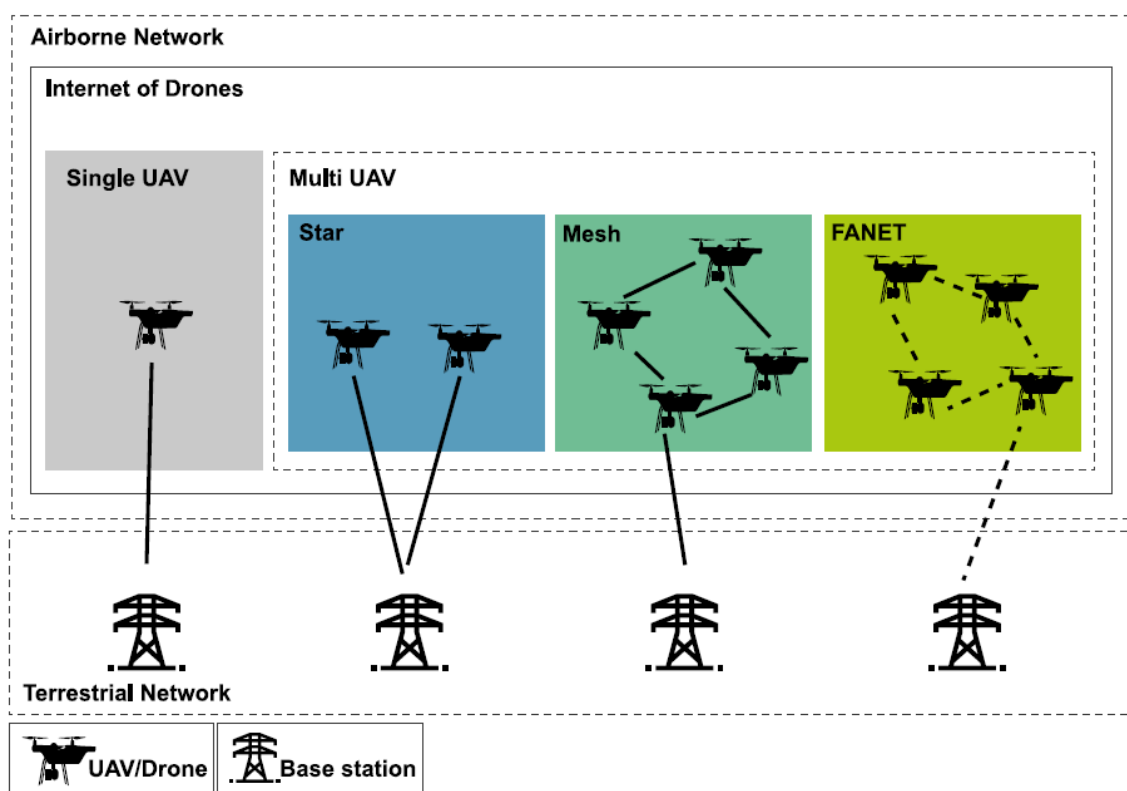
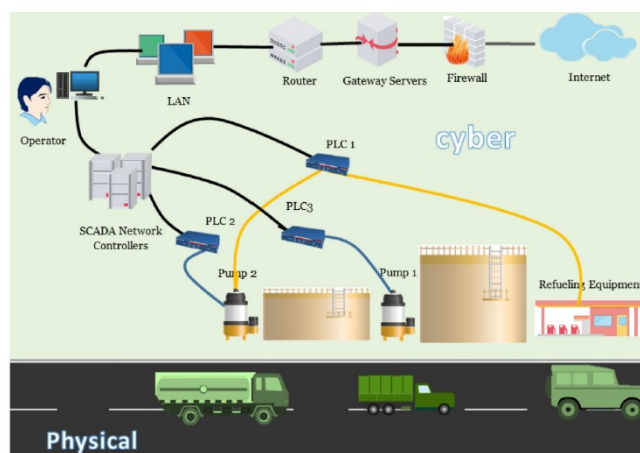


Figure 2:

An example of a cyber attack¹⁴



Uticaji veštačke inteligencije na savremeno ratovanje

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Sažetak

Savremeni oružani sukobi sve se više oslanjaju na tehnologije poput veštačke inteligencije (VI), bespilotnih letelica (dronova) i sajber napada, koje transformišu tradicionalne paradigme ratovanja. Istraživanja uloge VI omogućavaju razvoj automatizovanih sistema donošenja odluka, prediktivne analize pretnji i efikasnijeg upravljanja vojnim operacijama. Upotreba dronova pruža prednosti u izviđanju, određivanju ciljeva i logistici, dok sajber ratovanje omogućava napade na kritične infrastrukture bez direktne fizičke konfrontacije, uz potencijalno značajne bezbednosne i ekonomske posledice. Proučavanje ovih oblasti ključno je za razumevanje novih oblika sukoba, unapređenje odbrambenih strategija i razvoj međunarodnih pravnih i etičkih okvira. Ovaj rad naglašava potrebu za kontinuiranim istraživanjima radi prilagođavanja bezbednosnih politika, unapređenja tehnoloških inovacija i obezbeđivanja stabilnosti u okviru dinamičnih i složenih sistema savremenog ratovanja.

Ključne reči: veštačka inteligencija, oružani sukobi, vojne operacije, dronovi, sajber napadi