Security Council

Artificial Intelligence and Control of Nuclear Weapons

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Contents

Introduction....1
Background....3
Current Situation....4
Role of the United Nations....5
Landmark UN Resolutions....7
Major Country and Bloc Positions....9
Some Proposals for Action....12
Bibliography....14

Introduction

Application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to command and control of nuclear weapons brings together the most revolutionary computation capabilities and the most destructive weapons. Some of this has happened already, other applications are only imagined. The impact of AI on nuclear strategy can be positive, enhancing nuclear deterrence and promoting stability. But more dangerous risks are readily imagined. Elements of AI have been part of nuclear command for decades, guiding and supporting human decision-making.[1] Much of today's concern is whether AI will play an autonomous role, potentially contradicting or removing human decision-makers.

The great prominence of AI since Large Language Models (LLMs) were publicly released in 2022 raises unprecedented possibilities and dangers, putting new pressure on the United Nations to create global guidance. The problems of AI in nuclear weapons policy and decision-making could not be more dire. Whether the UN is capable of agreeing on such measures, and whether UN guidance can be of practical use, are major questions for this ODUMUN simulation.

The nine nuclear weapons states all guard their sovereign control over their nuclear forces. They maintain secrecy over all aspects of their nuclear war planning. Their nuclear command and control practices are poorly understood by the international community and their own public.[2] The emphasis on sovereign control leaves little if any role for international institutions, especially since the last arms control agreement–the New START Treaty–limiting the nuclear forces of the Russian Federation and United States ended in February 2026.[3] There now is no major international agreement limiting the permitted size of the nuclear forces of any of the nine nuclear weapons states. Since it cannot directly change their nuclear policies, the most likely role for the UN is establishing *global principles and norms* regarding the role of AI in nuclear operations, encouraging the nine nuclear weapons states to follow UN *best practices*.

[1] Rautenbach, Peter, 2022. 'On integrating artificial intelligence with nuclear control', Arms Control Today, September 2022, https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2022-09/features/integrating-artificial-intelligence-nuclear-control

[2] Ma, Alexandra, and Shayanne Gal, 2026. 'These are the 9 nuclear-armed countries and the 31 allies they've vowed to defend', Business Insider, 26 September 2026, https://www.businessinsider.com/these-are-the-9-countries-with-nuclear-weapons-2018-10

[3] Dumbacher, Erin D., 2026. 'Nukes Without Limits? A New Era After the End of New START', Council on Foreign Relations, 9 February 2026, https://www.cfr.org/articles/nukes-without-limits-a-new-era-after-the-end-of-new-start



AI could strengthen nuclear deterrence by improving early warning of attack, enhance the survivability of nuclear forces, and ensure official communications throughout nuclear control systems. But it also could create pressure to greatly accelerate nuclear weapons decision-making, worsening spirals to use it or lose it, potentially increasing the likelihood of nuclear war, and prolonging nuclear war should it occur. This raises concerns that one analyst describes as 'Nuclear command without sufficient control.'[4]

AI already has transformed military operations, primarily through enhanced targeting and attack planning. Perhaps the most prominent example is the American Project Maven, also known as the Maven Smart System, an AI-based system developed by the US Department of Defense and Palantir Technologies in 2017-26. Maven reportedly accelerated the American and Israeli attacks on nuclear and conventional targets Iran in 2025-26, greatly enhancing the speed and efficiency of target identification and attack planning.[5] But weaknesses of the system also were revealed, especially through the mistaken attack on an Iranian girl school on 28 February 2026, reportedly killing 156, apparently due to reliance on outdated information.[6] AI targeting also is widely used by both Russia and Ukraine to guide drone attacks.

The integration of AI in nuclear weapons is arguably the most controversial use of the technology. The stakes are high as the use of AI will shake up the reliability of Nuclear Stability.

Historically, nuclear stability relied on human judgement, which the AI will not have. AI will lack the morality and ethics of a human and will operate in a cold and calculated manner. The introduction of LLM's also increases the risk of hallucinations occurring without any means to dissect why the LLM decided that it was a good idea to either launch or disarm a nuclear weapon due to the current black-box problem that the leading experts have yet to solve. Artificial Intelligence has the potential to start a nuclear war by encouraging the launch of weapons with completely fabricated justification that can not be thoroughly verified.

The United Nations system through the General Assembly and Security Council can face these issues by establishing rules that all members must follow. shape the role of AI in nuclear decision-making, and encourage transparency. Any initiative will have to consider the likely pressure

[4] Undheim. Trond Arne, 2026. 'Nuclear command without control: AI and the problem of escalation opacity', Survival, August-September 2026, https://www.iiss.org/online-analysis/survival-online/2026/07/nuclear-command-without-control-ai-and-the-problem-of-escalation-opacity/

[5] Mande, Matt, and Gregory C. Allen. 2026. What Is Maven Smart System, and What Does It Do? Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2 June 2026, https://www.csis.org/analysis/what-maven-smart-system-and-what-does-it-do

[6] Beaumont, Peter, 2026. 'Iran school bombing: grounds to believe US was behind atrocity, UN finds', Guardian, 17 September 2026, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2026/sep/17/iran-school-bombing-un-mission-us-military-behind-attack

or even opposition from the nine nuclear weapons states and their dozens of allies who rely on the security guarantees of their nuclear deterrent capability.

Background

Despite the recent development of AI being popularized in the public, advanced algorithms were already employed by countries such as the United States and Russia. Around the early 1950's, during the era of nuclear-armed bombers, before the deployment of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), engineers developed the US Semi-Automated Ground Environment (SAGE) system, the first effort at a computerized common and control system. This system instructed the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) as it fought to defend against incoming Soviet nuclear bombers and missiles. This included dozens of the huge mainframe computers of the era, connecting early warning and battle management radars with missiles and aircraft. SAGE continuously sorted large amounts of data, reducing the risks of human error in tracking enemies and dissipating interceptors. Human operators, however, oversaw all SAGE operations. They alone made combat decisions. NORAD used SAGE until the 1970s, to be ready to detect incoming nuclear weapons.

Fast forward to the 1980s when the Soviet Union (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, USSR) deployed an automated nuclear weapons launch system, the 'Dead Hand System' also known as Perimeter.[7] Dead Hand is an automatic or semi-automatic nuclear system, activated during times of crisis. This guarantees nuclear retaliation in case of a first-strike from the United States, France or the United Kingdom. Even if the Soviet command authority, its civilian and military leaders, were all killed in nuclear strikes, or if communications were blocked, Soviet nuclear retaliatory forces–its aircraft, ICBMS and submarine launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs)–can be launched automatically. The goal was to ensure nuclear deterrence would hold regardless of events, maintaining Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) against Soviet enemies. Today Dead Hand uses data from satellites and land-based sensors such as seismic, light, radioactivity, and pressure sensors, to help Russian officials make the decision to launch nuclear weapons. In its fully automatic mode it does not require human decision-making.

Dead Hand became operational in 1993. It appears to remain operational to this day. The United States does not have a comparable automatic launch system.[8] Whether other nuclear armed states have something similar is unknown. Every nuclear armed state maintains its own nuclear Command and Control system (C^2, or Command, Control and Communications, C^3).

Whether or not other nuclear states have something comparable to Dead Hand, AI has the ability to ensure similar capabilities. Every nuclear armed state can integrating LLMs to process data on capability and force dispositions, detect threats, and support retaliatory or even first-strike decision-making. As new nuclear attack capabilities spread, such as hypersonic missiles (optimized to evade missile defenses) the pressure for rapid response in the face of nuclear attack grows. Russia has publicized its development of a new generation of 'invincible' nuclear weapons, including a nuclear-powered intercontinental range cruise missile and an intercontinental range nuclear torpedo, with the goal of ensuring Russia's ability to destroy the United States regardless of the circumstances.[9] China is greatly expanding its nuclear arsenal, increasing its ICBM

[7] Hoffman, David E., 2009. The Dead Hand: The Untold Story of the Cold War Arms Race and Its Dangerous Legacy. New York City: Anchor Books, 2009, https://www.amazon.com/Dead-Hand-Untold-Dangerous-Legacy/dp/0307387844/

[8] Lowther, Adam, and Curtis McGiffin, 2019. 'America Needs a "Dead Hand'', Air Force Institute of Technology, 23 August 2019, https://www.maxwell.af.mil/News/Commentaries/Display/Article/1942374/america-needs-a-dead-hand/

[9] Reuters, 2025. 'Putin praises capabilities, prospects of new Russian weapons', 4 November 2025, https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/putin-praises-capabilities-prospects-new-russian-weapons-2025-11-04/

force from 60 in 2010 to an expected 600 missiles and 1500 warheads by the year 2035.[10] India, North Korea and Pakistan are expanding their nuclear forces more slowly. France, the United Kingdom and the United States are modernizing their existing nuclear forces.

Improved, and in some countries expanded, nuclear forces may strengthen deterrence. They also can raise tensions and risks. These steps increase the pressure on everyone's command and control system. They have to be alert to first strike attacks, able to retaliate, but they also should be immune to mistakes. With integration of AI into command and control, it is easier to ensure more relevant information always is considered in nuclear decision-making, but the risk of losing control also could increase. How to ensure AI capabilities are integrated, while preventing them from taking initiatives without authorization, or taking authority away from human decision-makers?

Current Situation

With the rapid development of AI, there is global pressure for all countries with nuclear capability to integrate AI into their own respective Nuclear command, control and communications (NC3). There are a plethora of issues facing the UN, if it is to help ensure the technology is used to prevent sudden escalation of conflict. Some main issues:

- Escalation Pressure: Modern delivery systems of weapons have exponentially decreased the amount of time it takes for a weapon to go from launching from their home country to reaching their target country. AI, as stated in the background, is necessary in order to compensate for the lost time due to its exceptionally fast processing speed compared to a human. However, this could lead to increased escalation. AI could mark a conventional missile as a nuclear weapon and advise it to shoot back a nuclear weapon. In addition, the acceleration of escalation minimizes the role of human deliberation, along with the possibility of diplomatically de-escalating the conflict back to normal.
- AI's Infamous blackbox problem: Ideally, the AI would take information from various sources of information, and come up with a decision on whether or not a country's airspace is compromised. AI at the moment is unable to dissect which source they used in order to justify their output. This has been an ongoing issue that has yet to be solved by the leading researchers in the AI field. AIs are prone to hallucinations, data misinterpretations, and false positives. All of these issues are things humans are not able to thoroughly detect due to this black-box problem. To put it bluntly, we are not able to verify the validity of the AI's output, and one mistake could lead to catastrophic consequences that will be felt throughout the world for the foreseeable future. Countries need to find a way to determine whether the AI's output is legitimate or illegitimate in order to prevent accidental escalation.
- Human automation bias: Just because humans are in the loop of the actual launching of the weapon, that does not mean AI does not have an effect on their minds. Human operators have consistently fallen for "Automation Bias", meaning that humans trust the machine more than they trust themselves and often give up their judgement in exchange for the comfort of not having to think. People giving up their driving skills to self-driving cars could be another example of this. However, as opposed to a freak car accident, automation bias in this context can lead to the end of the world in this particular context. Countries need to come up with a solution to ensure that the humans who operate NC3 are actively engaged in the decision-making process. Countries must take human psychology into

[10] Kristensen, Hans M., Matt Korda, Eliana Johns and Mackenzie Knight-Boyle, 2026. 'Chinese nuclear weapons, 2026', Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 8 July 2026, https://thebulletin.org/premium/2026-07/chinese-nuclear-weapons-2026/

account while they integrate AI into their nuclear network.

- Adversarial Manipulation: Due to the sensitive nature in which NC3 systems operate, there is a limited amount of training data that is available to the AI, meaning that the benchmark of whether or not the AI is doing an effective job is heavily blurred. Due to the lack of training, it is possible for adversaries to poison training data and manipulate the AI to ignore specific threats. Data poisoning is subtle and very hard to track which adversary performed that threat. This also pairs along with the black-box problem, because now you're unable to figure out which source of information was poisoned since the AI is incapable of specifying what sources of information were used to create their output. Countries need to find a solution to maintain the integrity of the AI that is integrated to one's NC3 and prevent its system from being poisoned by an adversary.

Role of the United Nations

No UN body controls a single nuclear weapon. The nine unclear-armed states keep their command and control system secret and treat decisions about them as a matter of national sovereignty. With the expiry of the New START in February 2026, no treaty now limits the size of any nuclear arsenal. The UN's role on artificial intelligence (AI) in nuclear command, control and communications(NC3) is therefore indirect. It sets norms and provides forums where states can be pressed to explain their policies, gather expert advice, and build a record of what most of the world expects from the nuclear powers. However, each part of the UN system plays a different part in that works.

General Assembly

The General Assembly is where most of the UN action on military AI has taken place. Its First Committee, which handles disarmament and international security, negotiates draft resolutions each autumn and sends them to the full Assembly for adaptation in December. Every one of the 193 member states has an equal vote, so smaller states can shape the agenda even when the major powers object. Since 2023 the Assembly has adopted resolutions on lethal autonomous weapons, on AI in the military domain in general, and in 2025 on AI in nuclear command and control specifically. [11]

The 2025 resolution on NC3, resolution 80/23, shows both the strength and the weakness of this approach. It passed with 188 votes, but not one of the nine nuclear-armed states voted for it. France, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States, Israel and North Korea voted against, while China, India and Pakistan abstained.[12] Non-nuclear states were able to put the issue formally on the UN agenda and set out a clear expectation that humans must stay in control, but the states whose behavior the resolution is meant to change did not accept it.

The Assembly also relies on experts. Its resolution asks the Secretary General to collect the views of the government, international organisations, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Civil society, scientists and industry and to report back. The SG 2025 report on AI in the military domain (A/80/78) gathered these views in one place[13] In August 2025 the Assembly went further and created two standing bodies on AI in general: an Independent International Scientific Panel on

[11] UNGA. 2023. 'Lethal autonomous weapons systems', A/RES/78/241, New York: United Nations, 22 December 2023, https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/78/241; UNGA. 2024. 'Artificial intelligence in the military domain and its implications for international peace and security', A/RES/79/239, New York: United Nations, 24 December 2024, https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/79/239; UNGA. 2025. 'Possible risks of the integration of artificial intelligence into command, control and communications systems of nuclear weapons', A/RES/80/23, New York: United Nations, 1 December 2025, https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/80/23.

[12] UN Digital Library, 'Possible risks of the integration of artificial intelligence into command, control and communications systems of nuclear weapons: resolution / adopted by the General Assembly', voting record, https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4095461.

[13] UNODA. n.d. 'Artificial intelligence in the military domain', UNODA, accessed 14 October 2026, https://disarmament.unoda.org/en/node/87368.

AI and a Global Dialogue on AI Governance.[14] The panel met for the first time in Madrid in April 2026 and released a preliminary report in July 2026, the same month the Global Dialogue held it first full session in Geneva.[15] Neither body makes binding rules, and military AI is not their focus, but they give every state, not only the technology powers, a voice in how AI is governed.

Finally, the Assembly can convene meetings. Under resolution 80/58, the UN office for Disarmament Affairs held three days of informal exchange in Geneva from 15 to 17 of June 2026 on Ai in the Military Domain. In the meeting, many of the delegates insisted that the decision to use Nuclear weapon should and must be made by "humans, not machines." Proposals ranged from a legally binding ban on AI in targeting to voluntary information exchanges. No consensus was reached; the United States did not attend, and Russia opposed any binding measures.

Security Council

The Security Council has primary responsibility for international peace and security and is the only UN body whose decisions are legally binding on all Member States. However, its five permanent members (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States) are also five of the nine nuclear-armed states, and each can veto any resolution. This makes binding Council action on AI in nuclear weapons very unlikely.

The Council held formal meetings on AI in July 2023 under the United Kingdom's presidency, in December 2023 at the initiative of the United States, and in a high-level open debate on 24 September 2024 chaired by President Lee Jae Myung of the Republic of Korea.[16] At that meeting Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned that decisions on nuclear weapons "must rest with humans, not machines."[17] Since then the Council has convened several informal meetings to discuss related topics. Yet the Council still has adopted no resolution or presidential statement on AI. Its members disagree about whether the Council should take up the subject at all: some want it to anticipate new threats, while Russia and others prefer to leave the issue to the General Assembly and specialized forums.[18] The furthest the Council has gone is a joint statement by several members at the end of 2025, initiated by Slovenia, recognizing AI's risks and stressing that its use must comply with international law.[19]

Secretary General, UNODA and UNIDIR

The Secretary General has purchased harder than most member states. He has repeatedly called for a legally binding ban on lethal autonomous weapons systems that operate without human control and for human control over all decision to use nuclear weapons.[20] The office of disarmament Affairs (UNODA) supports the General Assembly by preparing reports and organising meetings such as the June 2026 Geneva exchanges. The UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) provides independent research on military AI and nuclear risk, which helps delegations that lack their own technical expertise.

[14] UNGA. 2025. 'Terms of reference and modalities for the establishment and functioning of the Independent International Scientific Panel on Artificial Intelligence and the Global Dialogue on Artificial Intelligence Governance', A/RES/79/325, New York: United Nations, 26 August 2025, https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/79/325.
[15] UN. n.d. 'Independent International Scientific Panel on AI: Frequently Asked Questions', accessed 14 October 2026, https://www.un.org/independent-international-scientific-panel-ai/en/faq.
[16] Security Council Report, 'High-Level Open Debate on Artificial Intelligence', What's In Blue, 23 September 2025, https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2025/09/high-level-open-debate-on-artificial-intelligence.php.
[17] UN News, '"Humanity's fate cannot be left to an algorithm": UN chief warns Security Council on AI', September 2025, https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/09/1165942.
[18] Security Council Report, 'High-Level Open Debate on Artificial Intelligence', What's In Blue, 23 September 2025, https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2025/09/high-level-open-debate-on-artificial-intelligence.php.
[19] Stimson Center, 'The UN Security Council in the AI Era', 2026, https://www.stimson.org/2026/the-un-security-council-in-the-ai-era/.
[20] UN News, '"Humanity's fate cannot be left to an algorithm": UN chief warns Security Council on AI', September 2025, https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/09/1165942.

The NPT and other treaty forums

Some of the most important discussions take place in treaty forums that meet at the UN but are run by their own member states. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) holds a Review Conference every five years. The 2026 Review Conference, held at UN Headquarters in April and May 2026, ended without a consensus outcome for the third time in a row. An early draft referred to keeping human control over nuclear weapons and to managing the risks of emerging technologies, but that language was dropped from the revised text as negotiations broke down over Iran, North Korea and other disputes.[21]

States parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) have also negotiated for years in a Group of Governmental Experts on lethal autonomous weapons. That work comes to a head at the CCW Review Conference in November 2026, where states will decide whether to begin negotiating a binding instrument.[22]

What the UN cannot do: its limitation of action

The UN's limits are significant but not exclusive only on the below.

- *No binding rules from the General Assembly.* Assembly resolutions are recommendations. Resolution 80/23 urges nuclear-armed states to publish policies on human control; it cannot require them to do so.
- *The veto*. Only the Security Council can make binding decisions, and its five permanent members, all nuclear-armed, can block any resolution that limits their freedom of action.
- *No verification.* The UN has no authority to inspect a state's nuclear command system or confirm that humans remain in control, and no nuclear-armed state has offered to allow such checks. Unlike nuclear materials, which the International Atomic Energy Agency can monitor, there is no international body that verifies how AI is used in NC3.
- *Secrecy.* NC3 systems are among the most closely guarded secrets any state keeps. Even basic transparency, such as publishing a national policy, is difficult to achieve.
- *Disagreement on basic terms.* States do not agree on what "human control" means in practice, or how much automation already exists in nuclear command and control. Russia, for example, objected to resolution 80/23 on the grounds that the field lacks agreed terminology and that nuclear AI issues belong in talks among nuclear-armed states.

For now, compliance depends on each state's own commitments and on the political cost of being seen to break them. The UN's main tools are pressure, persuasion, expert advice and the gradual building of shared norms.

Landmark UN Resolutions

The following decisions from the core of the UN's record on Military AI and nuclear risk. All are General Assembly Resolutions: the Security Council has adopted none of this subject as binding.

Resolution 78/241, Lethal autonomous weapons systems (22 December 2023). The Assembly's first resolution on autonomous weapons. It expressed concern about weapons that can select and engage targets without human intervention and asked the Secretary-General to collect states' views. Adopted 152 to 4, with 11 abstentions.[23]

[21] UN. 2026. 'Review Conference Ends without Consensus Outcome amid Rising Nuclear Risks', press release DC/3912, 2026, https://press.un.org/en/2026/dc3912.doc.htm.
[22] Opinio Juris, 'The Western Consensus That Was Not: Resolution 80/57, the Rolling Texts, Human Control Substitution and the Structural Stakes of the November 2026 CCW Review Conference', 27 August 2026, https://opiniojuris.org/2026/08/27/the-western-consensus-that-was-not-resolution-80-57-the-rolling-texts-human-control-substitution-and-the-structural-stakes-of-the-november-2026-ccw-review-conference/.
[23] UNGA. 2023. 'Lethal autonomous weapons systems', A/RES/78/241, New York: United Nations, 22 December 2023, https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/78/241.

The resolution asked the Secretary-General for a report on the opportunities and challenges of military AI, focusing on areas other than lethal autonomous weapons, based on the views of states, international organizations, the ICRC, civil society, scientists and industry. That report (A/80/78) was issued in 2025.[24] Adopted 159 to 2 (North Korea and Russia), with 5 abstentions (Belarus, Ethiopia, Iran, Nicaragua and Saudi Arabia).[25]

Resolution 79/239, Artificial Intelligence in the Military Domain and its implications for international peace and security (24 December 2024). The first General Assembly resolution on military AI in general, co-drafted by the Netherlands and the Republic of Korea, and the foundation for resolution 80/23. It did not create new law. Instead, it affirmed that existing international law, including the UN Charter and international Humanitarian law applies throughout all stages of the life cycle of AI in the military domain.[26]

Resolution 79/325 (26 August 2025). This resolution establishes the independent International Scientific Panel of Global Dialogue on AI Governance, the UN's first permanent structure for AI governance. Both began work in 2026. 40 Experts serving three-year terms in their capacity not as government representatives, with balance across regions and between women and men. More than 2,600 people from over 140 countries applied; the General Assembly appointed the members in February 2026. The Panel elected Yoshua Bengio (Canada) and Maria Ressa (Philippines) as co-chairs at its first meeting on 3 March 2026. Its job is to give governments independent, evidence-based assessments of AI's opportunities, risks and impacts through an annual report and shorter thematic briefs. It released its Preliminary Report on 1 July 2026 and, in September 2026, a first thematic brief on AI agents, misalignment and loss of human control.

Resolution 80/23, Possible risk of the integration of artificial intelligence into command, control and communication systems of Nuclear weapons (1 December 2025). The first UN resolution devoted to AI in nuclear command and control, sponsored by Austria, El Salvador, Kazakhstan, Kiribatti Malta and Mexico.[27] The main provisions of this resolution include:

Human Control: human control and oversight must be maintained over nuclear command, control and communication systems.

National Policies: nuclear-armed states that have not yet done so should adopt and publish national policies and doctrine confirming that their AI-enabled nuclear command and control systems remain under human control and will not autonomously initiate decision on the use of nuclear weapons, and to share these measures voluntarily in relevant forums.

Risk: its preamble warns that AI could distort decision-making, heighten the risk of accidental, unintended or unauthorised nuclear use, produce hallucinations, flawed output or malfunctions, or be exploited by intruders.

Possible Benefits: It recognised that AI might also help verify disarmament, provided such uses support nuclear risk reduction.

Follow Up: It calls for common understandings and confidence-building measures through the existing disarmament forum and keeps the item on the Assembly's agenda for years eighty-first session.

[24] UNODA. n.d. 'Artificial intelligence in the military domain', UNODA, accessed 14 October 2026, https://disarmament.unoda.org/en/node/87368.
[25] UN Digital Library, voting record for A/RES/79/239, https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4071348.
[26] UNGA. 2024. 'Artificial intelligence in the military domain and its implications for international peace and security', A/RES/79/239, New York: United Nations, 24 December 2024, https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/79/239; UNODA. n.d. 'Artificial intelligence in the military domain', UNODA, accessed 14 October 2026, https://disarmament.unoda.org/en/node/87368.
[27] Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 'Lessons from the UN's first resolution on AI in nuclear command and control', December 2025, https://thebulletin.org/2025/12/lessons-from-the-uns-first-resolution-on-ai-in-nuclear-command-and-control/.

Adopted 118 to 9, with 44 abstentions. France, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States, Israel and North Korea voted against, along with Argentina, Burundi and the Central African Republic. China, India and Pakistan abstained, as did most NATO members, Japan and the Republic of Korea, many of them allies that rely on US nuclear protection.[28] The nuclear-armed states argued that the text oversimplified the issue, ignored differences in their nuclear doctrines and asked for transparency about highly sensitive systems.

Resolution 80/57, Lethal autonomous weapons systems (1 December 2025). Continued the Assembly's work on autonomous weapons ahead of the November 2026 CCW Review Conference. Adopted 164 to 6, with 7 abstentions; Russia and the United States voted against, and China abstained.[29]

Resolution 80/58, Artificial intelligence in the military domain (1 December 2025). Built on resolution 79/239 and asked the Secretary-General to convene a three-day meeting of Member States in 2026, which took place in Geneva in June. Adopted 167 to 5, with 5 abstentions. The United States, which had supported the 2024 resolution, voted against, warning that the text risked creating "a global governance regime designed to institute centralized control over a critical technology."[30]

Major Country and Bloc Positions

African Union (AU): The African Union (AU) promotes sovereign equality among its 55 Member States. The AU takes very general positions on major international issues like governance, peacebuilding and development. AU resolutions tend to stress general principles, relevant to all of its Member States. It occasionally gets involved in regional conflicts, even authorizing peacekeeping missions, but not consistently.

Member States of the African Union are committed to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union's Agenda 2063, their 'blueprint and master plan for transforming Africa into the global powerhouse of the future.'[31] They generally see all issues before the UN in terms of those priorities. Also important are the anti-colonial priorities of the Non-Aligned Movement. African countries generally welcome foreign development assistance, but increasingly demand sovereign national control over specific projects, a demand that often creates tension with world-be donors, who have their own priorities, especially regarding democratization and accountability.

Above all, the member states of the AU work to ensure African voices are an important part of all UN decisions.[32] On AI, they demand assurances of access to the most advanced forms of AI, freedom to apply it as they see fit, and assurances others will not use it to weaken their sovereignty or national security or harm their development.

[28] UNGA. 2025. 'Possible risks of the integration of artificial intelligence into command, control and communications systems of nuclear weapons', A/RES/80/23, New York: United Nations, 1 December 2025, https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/80/23; UN Digital Library, 'Possible risks of the integration of artificial intelligence into command, control and communications systems of nuclear weapons: resolution / adopted by the General Assembly', voting record, https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4095461.

[29] UNGA. 2025. 'Lethal autonomous weapons systems', A/RES/80/57, New York: United Nations, 1 December 2025, https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4095989; Opinio Juris, 'The Western Consensus That Was Not: Resolution 80/57, the Rolling Texts, Human Control Substitution and the Structural Stakes of the November 2026 CCW Review Conference', 27 August 2026, https://opiniojuris.org/2026/08/27/the-western-consensus-that-was-not-resolution-80-57-the-rolling-texts-human-control-substitution-and-the-structural-stakes-of-the-november-2026-ccw-review-conference/.

[30] UNGA. 2025. 'Artificial intelligence in the military domain and its implications for international peace and security', A/RES/80/58, New York: United Nations, 1 December 2025, https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/80/58; Arms Control Association, 'U.S., Russia Oppose UN Resolutions on Military Use of AI', Arms Control Today, December 2025, https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2025-12/news/us-russia-oppose-un-resolutions-military-use-ai.

[31] 'Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want', African Union, n.d. https://au.int/en/agenda2063/overview; and 'Agenda 2063', Wikipedia, n.d. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agenda_2063

[32] Mogomotsi Magome, 'African leaders press United Nations for permanent seats on Security Council', Associated Press, 24 September 2026, https://apnews.com/article/africa-unga-security-council-reforms-9d29a10a8caf40a4876e2738446d2ee8

They are likely to demand any UN resolution include guarantees they will not be targeted with AI-based nuclear threats. Like the Arab League, the African Union leaves actual policy-making up to its Member States. On most issues, each state's parallel membership in the Non-Aligned Movement (below) also can be a reliable guide to their positions.

Arab League: Because of sharp differences among its 22 Member States, the Arab League tends to act cautiously on all matters. Member States tend to be strongly committed to multilateral diplomacy, but restrained by divisive national interests.[33]

There are sharp disagreements between Islamist and more secular governments, between Shi'ite dominated Iraq and other Sunni dominated countries, and disputes over influence such between Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.[34] On divisive and controversial issues the Arab League is especially likely to leave policy-making up to each of its Member States, who are free to pursue their own distinctive polices.

The biggest exception is any issue relevant to Palestine, on which it is more unified, especially regarding criticism of Israel. Arab League states are likely to see debate on almost any issue in terms relevant to their support for Palestine. On most other issues, each state's parallel membership in the Non-Aligned Movement (below) can be a more reliable guide to their national positions.

On AI, they demand assurances of access to the most advanced forms of AI, freedom to apply it as they see fit, and assurances others will not use it to weaken their sovereignty or national security or harm their development. They are likely to demand any UN resolution include guarantees they will not be targeted with AI-based nuclear threats.

China: While others are reducing their reliance on the UN, China is increasing its UN engagement. For China, the great appeal is the UN Charter's emphasis on national sovereign equality, which China sees as supporting its authority at home, and facilitating working with other countries as legal equals.[35] China supports goals established by the UN. It supports international institutions.[36] In the UN, China emphasizes solidary with the Global South and the member states of the Non-Aligned Movement.[37] China stresses the UN as a tool for increasing its influence over global values, a key element in its campaign to make the world more like China itself.

China's UN policy is not without concerns. It fears the UN will be used to create precedents for international action in the domestic affairs of Member States, precedents that could be used against China. As a Chinese UN diplomat said in another context, 'China's continuing and vehement insistence on respect for other nations' sovereignty is not only a cornerstone of its foreign policy but a foundational ethos for the government of a nation that has traditionally struggled to maintain control at its edges - from Xinjiang and Tibet in the far west to Hong Kong and Taiwan off its east coast.'[38]

[33] 'Algeria's quixotic approach to foreign policy', London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, March 2025, https://www.iiss.org/publications/strategic-comments/2025/03/algerias-quixotic-approach-to-foreign-policy/

[34] 'Saudi Arabian media steps up attacks on UAE as Gulf rift deepens". Financial Times. 21 January 2026, https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20260122-saudi-media-escalates-attacks-on-uae-as-gulf-rift-deepens/

[35] 'Xi says China always a trustworthy partner of UN', *Xinhua*, 1 September 2025, http://en.cppcc.gov.cn/2025-09/01/c_1120831.htm

[36] Wen Sheng, 'China leads global efforts to realize UN sustainable development goals for 2030', *Global Times*, 27 June 2023, https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202306/1293251.shtml

[37] 'China calls for more Global South voices to be heard at United Nations', Reuters, 17 June 2026, https://www.internazionale.it/ultime-notizie-reuters/2026/06/17/china-calls-for-more-global-south-voices-to-be-heard-at-united-nations

[38] Ted Anthony, 'China, at UN, warns against 'expansion of the battlefield' in the Ukraine war', *Associated Press*, 28 September 2024, https://apnews.com/article/china-united-nations-general-assembly-51ea58a6cd821656382f06ad0b3b93bc

China examines all proposals to be certain they cannot infringe its sovereignty. It rejects proposals that limit its freedom of action. China defends the sovereignty of all countries, fearful that any chip in the wall of state sovereignty and control could create a precedent that might someday be used against China. Heavily invested in AI for economic development, and sensitive to what it sees as efforts by other states to weaken its strength, China and its supporters will insist on freedom to develop AI as it sees fit, including military applications.

European Union: For the 27 Member States of the EU, multilateral politics always is primarily about universal values, ideas that apply to all states equally. EU Member States can be expected to stress an approach that serves the entire international community, not the interests of any particular state, with all countries working toward agreed goals and standards. It often is the most visionary of actors within the UN system. The European Union also is the most generous funder of global development projects, offering grants or subsidized, low-interest loans for major initiatives.

European Union member states are committed to multilateral decision-making, but will work for their distinct national interests. Nuclear issues make this especially clear, with EU states increasingly thinking about relying on France's nuclear force to ensure their security. They are likely to encourage development of global principles, but will leave implementation of those to the Member States.

Non-Aligned Movement: The 120 Member States and 18 Observer states of the NAM, the UN's dominant voting bloc, are primarily interested in issues that serve their needs as developing economies and post-colonial states. They seek to reduce poverty and demand faster economic development. The NAM generally supports universal values, such as Chinese or EU efforts to create global standards on these issues. Most are post-colonial states, demanding compensation for past colonial rule.

Where the NAM departs from the EU and other advocates of multilateral action, is on funding and national control. Although many of its members are not poor—its membership includes wealthy oil exporters—the NAM routinely demands that any proposal for action come with increases in foreign aid from wealthier Western countries.

On AI, they demand assurances of access to the most advanced forms of AI, freedom to apply it as they see fit, and assurances others will not use it to weaken their sovereignty or national security or harm their development. They are likely to demand any UN resolution include guarantees they will not be targeted with AI-based nuclear threats.

Russian Federation: Russia can be an unpredictable actor in UN bodies. Its primary goal in all UN fora is insulating Russian freedom of action in its war with Ukraine, the Special Military Operation, to ensure other issues cannot become a wedge allowing discussion of the war or its effects. Suspicious of spying and subversion, Russia resists foreign intervention or inspection of its military programs, including military AI.

Russia's general goal at the UN is defeat of the West, meaning Europe, Japan, the United States and other English-speaking democracies. In the words of Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, 'The Western minority, which dominated for 500 years thanks to others' resources, continues to try to maintain its privileges and impose its own rules on everyone else.' Quoting President Vladimir V. Putin, he asserted that 'the dictatorship of one hegemon is spiraling out of control – it's dangerous for everyone else'.[39]

Russia usually votes with the Non-Aligned Movement. It can rely on support from socialist countries like Cuba, Nicaragua, Venezuela and sometimes Vietnam. South Africa and African countries that depend on Russian military help also can be sympathetic. On particular issues the

[39] Russian Federation. His Excellency Sergey Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs, 26 September 2026, https://gadebate.un.org/en/81/russian-federation

Russian Federation can work with China, Iran and North Korea.[40] Under the leadership of President Trump, the United States cooperates with Russia, albeit unpredictably.[41]

United States: The United States works to minimize the role of the UN in all international issues. Cutting UN budgets is a prominent American goal, applied to any issue.[42] Expect American diplomats to emphasize reducing the cost and impact of any UN initiative. The ideal UN initiative, from their perspective, allows each Member State to do as they please.

Under President Trump, the United States rejects core values of the UN Charter, stressing instead the sovereign right to maximize American power. In the President's words, 'The United Nations has great, great potential. I've said that for many years, but it must stop imposing the far left agenda of globalist bureaucrats who nobody ever elected.'[43] The American approach gets international support from conservative governments in countries like Argentina, Colombia, El Salvador, Ecuador, Israel, and Serbia and sometimes from heavily dependent countries like Estonia, Georgia, Lithuania, Moldova and Ukraine. Sometimes the Russian Federation will support the United States on specific issues.

A major United States goal is defeating initiatives it associates with Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI, or *wokeness*), usually meaning support for previously marginalized social groups, including women, ethnic minorities, gender minorities, etcetera.[44] U.S. officials at the UN also oppose resolutions that appear to help marginalized groups.[45]

On AI, President Trump is very supportive of new applications, insisting on the greatest possible freedom for AI firms. Opposition to regulation and principles that inhibit new applications is to be expected. American UN diplomacy often is very personal, stressing measures to enhance the personal wealth of President Donald Trump, his family and friends. The United States generally prefers working with authoritarian leaders, who usually are more responsive than democracies. A real estate deal with the President's family, involving territory in a host country, might bring American support on other issues.[46] US leaders also value money-making opportunities through cryptocurrency deals and control over oil and mining, which can affect their preferences on these issues as well.[47]

Some Proposals for Action

The Member States of the UN are sovereign, with complete freedom to develop solutions they prefer, whether in their own national interest or the broader interests of the international community.

Delegations may find it easier to agree on principles (or platitudes, if one is feeling irritable), rather than concrete proposals to resolve specific budget problem. Even agreement on principles

[40] 'General Assembly debates Russian Federation's Security Council veto of European amendments seeking 'Just' Peace in Ukraine', *United Nations*, 6 March 2025, https://press.un.org/en/2025/ga12677.doc.htm
[41] James Landale and Patrick Jackson, 'US sides with Russia in UN resolutions on Ukraine', *BBC News*, 25 February 2025, https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c7435pnle0go
[42] Amy Mackinnon, Waltz vows to take Trump's chainsaw to the United Nations', *Politico*, 15 June 2025, https://www.politico.com/news/2025/07/15/mike-waltz-un-ambassador-hearing-00454617
[43] United States of America. His Excellency Donald Trump, President. New York: United Nations, 22 September 2026, https://gadebate.un.org/en/81/united-states-america
[44] Carter Sherman, 'Trump administration to block aid from subsidizing DEI and trans rights overseas', Guardian, 22 January 2026, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/jan/22/trump-foreign-aid-dei-trans-rights
[45] Sarah Davis, 'US only country to oppose UN resolution correcting Africa's size on world maps', The Hill, 5 September 2026, https://thehill.com/policy/international/6072979-us-opposes-un-map-resolution-africa/
[46] Isaac Stanley-Becker, 'The Trump family sparks a revolution in Albania', The Atlantic, 23 July 2026, https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/2026/07/trump-kushner-flamingo-revolution-albania/688030/
[47] Anatoly Kurmanaev, Tyler Pager and Rebecca R. Ruiz, 'Trump brought Venezuelan gold to the U.S., but refiners won't touch it', New York Times, 28 September 2026, https://www.nytimes.com/2026/09/28/world/americas/venezuela-gold-trump.html

can be difficult on contentious issues like AI, when national interests and attitudes vary, and especially with a subject as sensitive as nuclear weapons. Under such tensions, achieving general agreement on principles is an important accomplishment.

Authorize a study by the UN Secretary-General to examine the risks and responses to the rising role of AI in nuclear strategy and decision-making. When the UN is unable to agree on an issue but determined to act, authorizing a study often is the easiest path. A study informs the Member States about what is feasible, educates the States on problems and possibilities for later action, and not least, it is a way of keeping an issue alive while delaying. A study is not without controversy. Delegates must refine its Terms of Reference (ToR). Will its recommendations be binding on the General Assembly, becoming the basis of a future revolution? Or are they merely advisory?

Also problematic is staffing for the study group. Will it be undertaken by a *Panel of Independent Experts* chosen by the Secretary-General. If the experts are qualified scholars or specialists, this usually ensures an insightful document with strong recommendations. Governments may demand, instead, that it is undertaken by a *Panel of Government Experts*, chosen by the Member States themselves. This ensures that the final report does not cause problems for their governments and serves their national interests. In either case, the solution must say how big the panel will be, how experts are chosen, their schedule for producing the report, and the goals of the report.

Request all UN Member States to always keep human decision-makers involved in all **decision-making regarding nuclear weapons**, including deployment, activation, alert status, targeting and launch approval. The UN can agree that AI must be fenced, limited to a supporting role, for specific tasks, such as supplying information or advising. The UN cannot demand that the nuclear armed states limit the role of IA, because they are sovereign, but the UN can establish moral principles and propose rules for them to follow.

Request all UN Member States to be transparent about the role of AI in their nuclear weapons decision-making. To enhance confidence among the international community that the world is not being exposed to unknown risks, the UN can ask its Member States to report regularly on their military or nuclear weapons-related AI applications. This would not change the risks or challenge national control, but it could build confidence that global safety is not being weakened.

The actual reporting requirements would have to be specified: which AI programs, reported in how much detail, and on what schedule? There will be resistance from nuclear weapons states and their allies who rely on their nuclear deterrent capabilities, fearful of losing military secrets. Some will see reporting as an infringement of their national sovereignty and freedom of action. Others will be distrustful, afraid their reporting will not be reciprocated by others. The resolution could address these concerns.

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