TPM Vol. 32, No. S1, 2025
ISSN: 1972-6325
https://www.tpmap.org/

Open Access

AI-ENABLED WARFARE IN CONTESTED REGIONS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF IRAN–ISRAEL AND SOUTH ASIA

SHAHBAZ AHMED SHAHZAD
NUST INSTITUTE OF PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES (NIPCONS), NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCES & TECHNOLOGY (NUST), ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN

BASIT AZIZ
PHD SCHOLOR, DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCES, COMSATS UNIVERSITY LAHORE

ASMAT ULLAH KHAN
PHD SCHOLAR, IR DEPARTMENT, NDU, ISLAMABAD

MUHAMMAD UMAIR WARSI
DEPART: FICT - COMPUTER SCIENCE UNI / AFFILIATION: BUITMS QUETTA BALOCHISTAN

ABSTRACT
Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming the modern warfare by improving the intelligence analysis, autonomous systems and the decision making process and hence having an impact on the strategic stability of the disputed areas. The research is a qualitative comparative case study on the implication of AI-enabled military technologies in the case of two long term rivalries; Iran-Israel strategic competition, and India-Pakistan security dilemma in South Asia. This paper will rely on peer-reviewed literature on the militarisation of AI, autonomous weapons, and strategic stability, analyzing the ways in which the adoption of AI changes the war doctrines, the methods of escalation, and the structures of regional security. Although AI powered technologies have benefits as far as their operations are concerned, they present more security dilemmas and pose ethical and legal issues within the global systems as we know them. The comparative analysis adds to the perception of the influence of AI on the conflict dynamics including technological competition and historical rivalry.
Keywords: AI, self-driving weapons, war strategy, Iran-Israel, India-Pakistan, strategic stability, security dilemma, self-driving warfare.

INTRODUCTION

History: Artificial Intelligence and the Evolution of Warfare
Artificial intelligence (AI) can be described as computer systems that can analyze complex data, learn trends, and make decisions by various degrees of human control. Military systems have changed under the rapid development of machine learning, autonomous robotics, and data analytics, which have allowed implementing such functions as precision targets, predictive surveillance, and autonomous decision support (Abbasi and Uzzaman, 2022). The use of AI in military technology is not just a change in technology, but a more fundamental change in the way companies acquire information, organize their operations, and perform combat duties.
The emergence of AI in military use is associated with larger changes in the balance of power in the world and military strategy, and it is a topic of utmost importance to study on the international security community. Such technologies will not only affect the tactical result on the warfield but also strategic contacts between the nuclear armed states where an error in calculations can be disastrous. The concept of AI thus takes center stage in the discourse on the future of warfare, accountability in target selection and the level of deterrence and escalation in conflict-ridden areas.
Theoretical Framework: Strategic Stability and Security Dilemma
This study can be analyzed using two concepts:
Security Dilemma: When a state strengthens its defence in the context of AI integration, other states can also become the unintended targets, which results in the emergence of arms races and general deterioration of security (Khurshid, 2023). This is mostly applicable in areas where suspicion and past animosity forms policy conduct.
Strategic Stability: This is the state where the states are discouraged to start warfare because they can predict the reaction habits and because of the weaknesses that the other states share. The AI-enabled systems may complicate the situation of strategic stability, as they make decisions faster and leave less room to human judgment, increasing chances of an unintentional escalation (Abbasi and Uzzaman, 2022; Masood and Baig, 2023).

Case Focus: Iran-Israel Strategic Competition

The AI assisted systems have been applied by the defence establishment of Israel in processing intelligence, physical target acquisition, and autonomous support in the conflict theatres, with recorded applications of machine learning in analyzing battlefield data and target search in the Middle East operations (Military applications of artificial intelligence, 2023). Being limited by technological access, Iran has focused on asymmetric uses to improve the use of improvised AI assisted drones and cyber tools to offset traditional disadvantages (Military applications of artificial intelligence, 2023).

Case Study: The India-Pakistan Competition of South Asia

The antagonism between India and Pakistan that has been a longstanding rivalry in South Asia is one of the most delicate areas to observe how AI affects strategic stability. Both states are equipped with nuclear weapons, which according to the theory of deterrence are the stabilisers; nevertheless, the recent technological advancements like AI disrupt this balance by bringing an element of uncertainty to command and control, early warning, and decision support.

Studies on South Asian security have indicated that militarisation of AI, such as lethal autonomous weapons and automation of battlefields, will change the balance of power and amplify the security dilemma. Research notes that AI empowered systems, including data analytics and autonomous surveillance, can make military performance more effective, but they also shorten the response times, which can create the risk of misconception and quick escalation (Abbasi and Uzzaman, 2022).

Strategic Stability implication

The impact of AI on war has a number of consequences:

Quickening Decision Loops: Autonomous systems are able to make a huge amount of data go through much quicker than humans, which is beneficial to the operations, but reduces the time frame during which the information is carefully evaluated. This time compression may increase the chances of estimation or unintentional scaling between opponents who misunderstand AI produced tests.

Security Dilemmas, Arms Races: In both of the regional settings analyzed in this paper, AI introduction can trigger competition spiral. The South Asian case of AI application in the military can promote the mutual modernisation even without the open conflict (Abbasi & Uzzaman, 2022).

Ethical and Legal Issues: The use of autonomous weapons and AI-assistance decision aids affects the current structures of international humanitarian law and accountability, especially when machines are making or participating in lethal decisions without complete human oversight.

Rationalization of Qualitative Comparative Methodology

The qualitative comparative case study methodology is used in the given study since it will permit the in-depth analysis of the complex political and technological interactions in the specific contexts of the regions. In contrast to quantitative research, where the researcher concentrates on numerical values or correlations, qualitative comparison relies on academic books, policy documents, and the analysis of experts to understand the way in which states view and react to AI-related military advances. It is a suitable methodology to investigate subtle questions of doctrine, perception and strategic behaviour in uncertain and competitive conditions.

Research Objectives

1. To analyze the usage and assimilation of AI technologies in military policies of Iran, Israel, India and Pakistan.
2. To investigate the consequences of AI empowered warfare on strategic stability, security dilemmas and escalation threats in disputed areas.
3. To examine the ethical, legal and governance issues related to AI in the military operations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Artificial Intelligence and Future Warfare

The modern warfare is becoming more technologically advanced through artificial intelligence (AI), which allows making decisions faster, delivers precise targeting, and improves the analysis of intelligence (Abbasi and Uzzaman, 2022). The states are able to gain operational benefits by incorporating AI into military systems to provide automated surveillance, predictive analytics, and systems of decision support (Khurshid and Zaman, 2023). On the one hand, scholars suggest that AI has sparked a revolution in the military through changing the strategy planning and threat assessment, especially in disputed areas (Masood and Baig, 2023).

Autonomous Weapon Systems (AWS) and Operational Risks

Autonomous Weapon Systems (AWS) Autonomous Weapon Systems (AWS) have the potential to be very strategic and ethically dangerous, as they are capable of selecting and attacking targets with only minimal human supervision. It has been demonstrated that AWS can fail to recognize its targets or behave randomly when faced with more complicated battlefield situations, making it difficult to hold it accountable and ethically make decisions (Masood and Baig, 2023; Rafiq, 2021). AWS can reduce response times and increase stress between India and Pakistan in South Asia, which increases the security dilemma (Abbasi and Uzzaman, 2022).

Artificial Intelligence in War-Torn States: South Asia and Middle East

The use of AI in military institutions, especially India has been linked to improved surveillance powers and abilities of the military institutions (Khurshid and Zaman, 2023). The military reaction of Pakistan to the implementation of AI by India is a mutual process that led to the increased security challenges in the region (Arif, 2019).

The high-tech orientation of the military (AI and autonomous systems) is observed in the Middle East through the strategic use of AI and autonomous systems by Israel, such as missile defense systems and target recognition systems. Iran, even less technologically advanced, uses low-cost, autonomous vehicles and computer equipment to compensate technological superiority of Israel. This comparison shows that the strategies of adopting AI vary based on regional technological and strategic asymmetries.

Security Dilemma and Strategic Stability

The literature highlights the fact that the introduction of AI into military systems influences the stability of strategies by reducing the time interval of decisions made and increasing the risk of errors during crisis situations (South Asia Journal, 2023). AI-powered military modernization can increase the threats in both South Asia and the Middle East because states would view the capabilities of their enemies as a threat and respond to them accordingly, leading to a significant threat of escalation (Abbasi and Uzzaman, 2022; Masood and Baig, 2023).

Ethical and Legal Implications

The legal and ethical aspects of AI in wars are a much-discussed topic. International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC, 2023) adds that to make sure that the AI systems adhere to the International Humanitarian Law (IHL), human control of the latter remains essential. The researchers claim that without a clear definition of accountability mechanisms, AWS can erode the fundamental IHL principles, such as distinction and proportionality (Bousquet, 2022; Crootof, 2015).

Gaps in Existing Literature

Despite the extensive body of scholarly research on the topics of AI (especially in the context of the military), not many studies offer a comparative view of AI-enabled warfare within specific regional conflicts, including Iran-Israel and India-Pakistan. This study can fill this gap by considering strategic and normative consequences of AI adoption in such disputed areas.

The case study Ion AI and modern conflict is Iran-Israel

The Iran-Israeli rivalry is considered to be the oldest conflict in the Middle East due to the ideological tensions, proxy wars, and rivalry in the military technologies. Israel has also been one of the pioneering users on sophisticated surveillance and reconnaissance systems, including unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) like IAI Heron and Searcher series, which have provided it with a tremendous boost to its intelligence and reconnaissance capabilities in the air as well as surveillance. Thanks to these systems, commanders can gather real-time information about the battlefield and can have a high situational awareness (IAI Heron; IAI Searcher, 2023). Over the last few years, Israel Defence Forces (IDF) have been progressively utilizing AI-assisted targeting systems in their decision-support. Algorithms like The Gospel are used to analyse large amounts of intelligence data algorithmically and rank potential targets in greater speed than an older method of operation, which was manual (AI-assisted targeting in the Gaza Strip, 2023). Together, these AI-enhanced systems have enhanced the operational coordination and speed of decision-making by Israel in conflict settings, which has enhanced its deterrence posture by increasing its response times and making better threat judgments.

Such methods enable Iran to project the power indirectly, frequently with the help of non-state proxies, and to minimize the financial and operational expenditures on the projection of the power. This kind of asymmetric use of technology has become one of the primary elements of regional military posture in Iran and its attempts to overcome the technological dominance of Israel.The effect of AI and autonomous systems on bigger strategic dynamics is also concise by reducing the decision-making process and accelerating the military actions. Quickly reacting to data and automated analytical systems may decrease the time available to people to deliberate and can increase the chances of wrong calculations in the times of crisis (Rafiq, 2021). Additionally, the Iranian and Israeli nations invest in the capabilities of cyber and electronic warfare, where AI-based systems can help detect threats, coordinate them defensively and attack. The involvement of AI in both the physical and the cyber space, therefore, adds to the uncertainty and strategic instability of the regional security environment.

The case study II is that of South Asia: India-Pakistan AI Militarization

The India-Pakistan rivalry is at the heart of the regional security in South Asia. Artificial intelligence has been integrated into the modernisation programmes in India, whereby machine learning, predictive analytics, and automated decision-support systems are being used to improve situational awareness and operational efficiency (Khurshid & Zaman, 2023). These are in line with a wider approach to increasing the intelligence, command, and control capacity, especially in highly tense settings within contested borderlines and sensitive areas (Khurshid and Zaman, 2023).

The strategic reaction of Pakistan has been based on asymmetric adaptation and not on extensive or massive integration of AI. The focus has been put in the discriminative application of autonomous systems, surveillance technologies, and command-support mechanisms to ensure strategic deterrence as a counter to increasing technological advantage in India. This will allow Pakistan to increase its intelligence collection capacities and quick reaction without resorting to an uncontrolled technological arm race that will only destabilise the region even more.

The similar advancement of both states to incorporate AI-related technologies amplifies the security dilemma in the region. The development of AI-based military technologies in India provides a reason to push Pakistan into counter-adaptive solutions, which promotes the elements of distrust and competing innovations. Although AI systems may enhance operational efficiency and responsiveness, they also shorten the decision-making timeframe which exposes the risk of the miscalculation in the times of crisis specifically along the Line of Control and other crisis-sensitive areas (Rafiq, 2021).

COMPARATIVE INSIGHTS

It is possible to draw three vital patterns comparing the cases of Iran and Israel and India and Pakistan:

Technological Asymmetry: More technologically advanced states (Israel and India) are more thoroughly using AI, and those (Iran and Pakistan) with fewer technological advantages implement more selective or asymmetric approaches to address the limitations.

Security Dilemmas: The use of AI in either of the regions increases the feeling of suspicion with each other since the use of automated and fast decision-making processes can be perceived as an offensive measure.

Escalation Risks: The accelerated operational cycles made by AI would decrease the time to monitor operations and engage in diplomatic dialogue, and are more likely to escalate a crisis in Middle Eastern and South Asian settings.

These trends show that AI does not affect only the technological aspect but is completely enmeshed in historical tensions, local ideologies, and views on strategy (Khurshid and Zaman, 2023; Rafiq, 2021).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This paper uses a qualitative comparative case study as a methodology to explore how AI-enabled warfare has affected the strategic stability in two conflict centers, Iran-Israel in the Middle East and India-Pakistan in South Asia. A qualitative method is suitable since the study is focused on learning the strategic, political, and technological forces of the adoption of AI, and does not need to measure variables (Yin, 2018). The in-depth case studies provide a method of analysis of contextual elements and therefore the insight into the similarities and differences between the different regions (Gerring, 2007).

Units of Analysis

The main segments of analysis are:

- **Military rivalry between Iran and Israel** - the use of AI in autonomous weapon systems, intelligence systems, surveillance, cyber activities, and doctrine.
- **India-Pakistan military rivalry -** based on AI in surveillance, intelligence, command-control, autonomous drones, operation planning.

The units of analysis are all examined through dynamics of regional security, regional historical rivalries as well as the technological strengths.

Sampling and Data Sources

Since the study is qualitative, purposive sampling will be used to choose believable, peer-reviewed, and government-proven sources pertinent to the topics of artificial intelligence and military strategy (Palinkas et al., 2015). The data sources include:

- Articles in academic journals (e.g., Khurshid and Zaman, 2023; Rafiq, 2021).
- Government and think tank reports (e.g. Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad, 2021)
- Military artificial intelligence and autonomous systems books and monographs (ex: Sanger, 2009; Scharre, 2018)
- International security organizations policy papers on artificial intelligence, autonomous weapons and new technologies in military.

It considers only the material that has been published not later than 2023 and excludes the option of using post-2023 sources because to ensure the methodological consistency, reliability, and authenticity.

Data Collection Methods

The information was gathered through documentary analysis, which is one of the standard techniques of the qualitative approach to case studies research (Bowen, 2009). The steps included:

- **Location of appropriate sources** - peer-reviewed publications, governmental sources, and believable think-tank reports.
- **Thematic content extraction**- thematic content is centered around AI applications, operational implications, strategic implications, ethical and legal implications, and regional security implications.
- **Cross-verification** - to verify the results achieved by comparing the results of two or more sources in order to be accurate and not to report biased results.

The approach would enable the research to create a holistic and dependable description of AI-enabled warfare on a regional basis.

Data Analysis Approach

The thematic content analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) is used to perform a systematic analysis of the textual information. The process involved:

- **Coding:** The important information concerning artificial intelligence technologies, military operational practices, military doctrine, and military operational results were coded.
- **Theme Identification**: Themes and trends were also determined, including the technological asymmetry, security dilemmas, risks of escalation, and ethical issues.
- **Cross case Comparison**: Themes in the case of Iran-Israel were contrasted with India-Pakistan in order to find similarities, differences and strategic patterns.

This would give the study rich information that is contextual, and not quantified using statistics, which is in line with qualitative research methodology.

Ethical Considerations

Some ethical behaviors in this study are:

- Relying on publicly available and reputable sources in order to prevent distortion of sensitive information.
- Referring to all sources in the APA 7 th edition format.
- Not making speculative or unsubstantiated assertions on classified military technology.

The paper is fully consistent with the principle of academic integrity and participates in data selection and analysis transparency.

Trustworthiness and Rigor

The study will use the following to increase credibility:

Triangulation: The validation of results with multiple sources of data (Shenton, 2004).

Reflexivity: Understanding bias in research and defining methodological decisions.

Audit Trail: A record of data collection and data analysis to enable it to be repeated and verified.

The strategies guarantee the findings to be strong, trustworthy and scholarly justifiable.

Reasons why Qualitative Case Study is justified

The qualitative case study design is most appropriate as it is chosen because:

- It represents intricate, context relevant phenomena that are difficult to quantify.
- It can be used to make comparative analysis of the strategic approaches of regions that may have different technological capabilities and geopolitical situations.
- It assists in providing rich thematic understanding of security dilemma, risks of escalation and policy implications of AI use in warfare.

In this way, this methodology corresponds to the research questions on how AI changes the strategic stability and military rivalry in the contested areas.

RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

The qualitative analysis of the two case studies Iran-Israel and India-Pakistan suggest the existence of a number of repeated patterns in the implementation and the strategic implications of AI-controlled warfare. Thematic content analysis was used to analyze data and thereby enabled the establishment of the similarities and differences in dynamics between the two regional settings. The discussion shows the impact of artificial intelligence on the strategic and operational behaviour of the military, especially in conditions that are characterised by rivalry and challenged security perceptions.

The results are categorised under three overarching themes namely (1) technological asymmetry, (2) security dilemmas, and (3) escalation risks. The themes are addressed one by one with evidence provided to the existing literature.

Technology Asymmetry: The theme 1 explores the idea behind technological asymmetry

In both areas, AI-enabled military capabilities are unequally adopted due to unequal technological capabilities. The more industrial and technologically developed states implement AI more actively, and their opponents use its selective and asymmetrical use in order to reimburse their structural drawbacks.

In the Iran-Israel scenario, Israel has traditionally been ahead of the curve in terms of intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, and precision strikes due to the high-level automation and information-based system. The research into autonomous weapons and AI in the military has shown that the strategy of the Israelis is based on networked intelligence, fast data processing, and integrated decision-support systems that improve the coordination of operations (Singer, 2009; Scharre, 2018). Economically sanctioned, with restricted access to modern technologies, Iran has sought asymmetric solutions to its problems with a focus on unmanned aerial vehicles, loitering munitions, and cheaper autonomous platforms. These systems will enable Iran to become more surveillant and reach without direct technological rivalry with Israel (Rafiq, 2021).

The same tendency can be seen in South Asia. The process of modernisation in Indian military programs is also starting to bring artificial intelligence to the command-and-control systems, threat forecasting, and battlefield management, especially the high-tension conditions of conflict-ridden borders (Khurshid and Zaman, 2023).

As Pakistan operates under comparatively lower technology and resource bases, it reacts by choosing autonomous drones, improved surveillance, and decision-support tools to conserve deterrence without investing as well as India (Rafiq, 2021).

Interpretation Technological asymmetry influences the strategic decision making as the technologically superior states strive towards acquiring the benefits of deterrence, whereas less powerful actors pursue the benefits of cost-efficient and adaptable solutions to achieve a strategic balance.

Theme 2: Beyond Security Dilemmas and Mutual Suspicion

Combination of AI in military systems is putting security dilemmas in the two regions. Computerized and statistically determined systems make it less transparent as to intentions, thus the chance of defensive preparations being seen as offensive ones is high.

In the Middle East, automation can increase the threat perception of Iranian perceptions even though Israeli systems are fabricated with defensive or intelligence motives. The sources on autonomous weaponry highlight minimized human transparency into the processes of AI in the context of increased mistrust and potential misinterpretation throughout moments of increased tension (Scharre, 2018).

In South Asia, the increasing dependence of India on AI-based systems of surveillance and decision-making generates a reason to consider counteractions on the part of Pakistan, which reinforces the cycles of anxiety. This dynamic exacerbates the security dilemma in the region, especially the ones associating with strategic intent, such as the Line of Control, where the quick pace of technological adaptation is tightly connected with the views of strategic intent (Khurshid and Zaman, 2023; Rafiq, 2021).

Insight: Artificial Intelligence not only improves the efficiency of operations but also increases uncertainty. Algorithms that detect decisions are prone to misinterpretation by opponents, which will reinforce security-spiraling and a mutual military adaptation.

Theme 3: Escalation Risks

One of the major observations in the two case studies is the risk of escalation that accompanies the use of AI in decision-making. Rapid response systems and automated analysis systems shorten the decision timelines; hence, eliminating the possibility of diplomatic involvement and human factors in crisis situations.

Automated intelligence processing and rapid-response defensive mechanisms have potential to be applied in the Iran-Israel case where the reaction to a perceived danger can be faster than the more established systems of de-escalation. Though they enhance responsiveness, they also create issues related to the possibility of unintended escalation in case automated assessment is misinterpreted or inaccurate (Singer, 2009; Scharre, 2018).

AI-assisted military systems in South Asia also shorten the time to deliberate on border incidents in high speed. This increase in the speed of decision-making can increase the likelihood of miscalculation, especially during crises when the political and military leadership is under extreme time pressure (Khurshid and Zaman, 2023; Rafiq, 2021).

Interpretation: In both areas, AI is an amplifier which accelerates speed and efficiency but at the same time, makes humans less present, which raises the risk of unintended acceleration.

Cross-Case Analysis

The comparison brings out a number of general lessons. To begin with, adaptive behaviour is motivated by technological asymmetry, wherein less developed states seek to pursue selective and asymmetric AI usages. Second, the use of AI heightens security dilemmas because of the increased uncertainty regarding the intentions of enemies. Third, accelerated decision-making processes through AI increase sensitivity to escalation, and, as a result, find challenged areas more susceptible to crisis instability.

Summary (Table 1)

Theme	Iran–Israel	India–Pakistan	Strategic Implication
Technological Asymmetry	Israel advanced automation; Iran selective autonomous systems	India advanced AI integration; Pakistan selective AI adoption	Asymmetry prompts adaptive counter-strategies
Security Dilemma	Defensive AI perceived as offensive	AI-driven adaptation fuels mistrust	Heightened uncertainty and reciprocal responses
Escalation Risk	Accelerated response timelines	Compressed decision cycles at borders	Increased risk of inadvertent escalation

Table 1: Key themes and cross-case insights derived from qualitative documentary analysis.

Summary of Findings

The analysis demonstrates that AI-enabled warfare is deeply shaped by regional context, existing rivalries, and relative technological capacity. Artificial intelligence amplifies security dilemmas by increasing mistrust and reducing transparency, while accelerated decision-making introduces new escalation risks in contested regions. At the same time, asymmetric AI strategies enable technologically weaker states to partially offset the advantages of stronger

adversaries. Overall, the findings reinforce existing scholarship that views AI not as an independent weapon but as a strategic multiplier that interacts with doctrine, historical rivalries, and regional security environments, shaping both military behaviour and conflict dynamics (Singer, 2009; Scharre, 2018; Rafiq, 2021; Khurshid & Zaman, 2023).

The discussion has shown that AI-intensive warfare is so regionalized, based on established enmities, and comparative technological prowess. Artificial intelligence has heightened security dilemmas through mistrust and lack of transparency, and the quicker decision-making process has brought novel acceleration risks to disputable areas. Simultaneously, the asymmetric AI approach allows the technologically inferior states to partially balance the gains of more powerful opponents. In general, the results are consistent with the current literature that considers AI as an instrument and tool rather than a weapon, which responds to the doctrine, historical conflicts, and regional security conditions, and subsequently influences military behaviour and conflict dynamics (Sanger, 2009; Scharre, 2018; Rafiq, 2021; Khurshid and Zaman, 2023).

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The comparison of AI-driven warfare in the disputed territories of Iran- Isreal and the situation between India and Pakistan can give valuable insights into how the develop servo technologies are transforming modern security relations. The results show that artificial intelligence is not an improvement to the existing technological capacity of the military; it is a disruptive element that can affect the strategic decision-making, deterrence relationships, and the stability of the region. The deterrent attitude of Israel, based on the long-term focus on sophisticated intelligence, surveillance, and automated defense technologies, has been strengthened by the Middle Eastern setting that allows Israel to respond more quickly to the threat identification, data processing, and operational coordination. The reaction by Iran, defined by the use of unmanned aerial vehicles and selective autonomous systems, is an asymmetric approach to counter the conventional as well as technological shortcomings. Such interaction demonstrates how the adoption of AI is likely to support the existing power asymmetries and also promote adaptive behavior among actors that are less technologically developed (Singer, 2009; Scharre, 2018; Rafiq, 2021).

The same process can be observed in South Asia, where the India-Pakistan confrontation proves how AI integration may contribute to the escalation of security dilemmas. The investment of India in the AI-assisted analytics, command and control systems, and battlefield management solutions increases the situational awareness and operational efficiency, especially in the high-tension situation in the contested borders. The case of a more selective use of AI-enabled surveillance and autonomous platforms in Pakistan is a strategic attempt to avoid deterrence and balance without having to risk the expensive technological game. These trends indicate that even though AI enhances military efficiency, it also creates an ambiguity in the intentions, which can only further undermine mistrust and widen the competition cycles of adaptation between opposing states (Khurshid and Zaman, 2023; Rafiq, 2021).

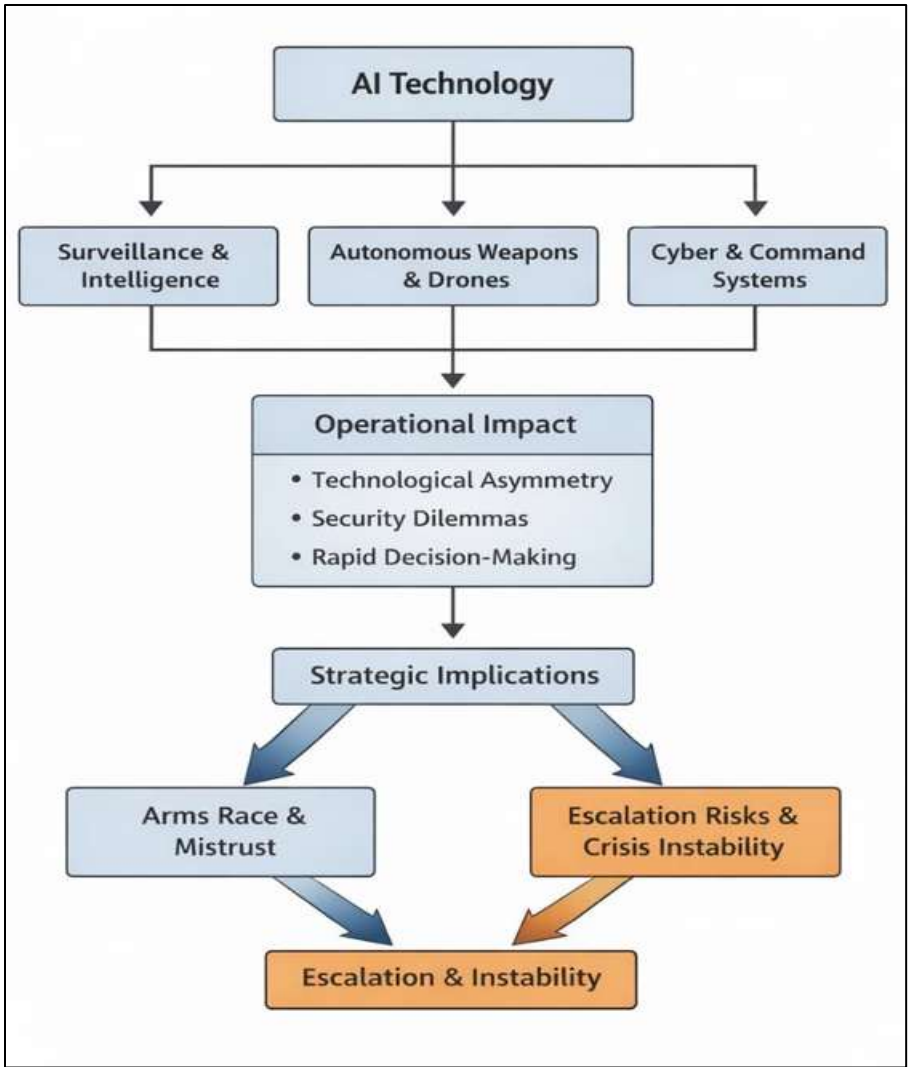
The results also show that systems facilitated by AI streamline decision-making periods, eliminating the possibility of human control and planning. Even though quick data processing and automatic testing may be beneficial in the cases of limited time, they precondition the possibility of error and unintentional intensification. On a personal level, AI-based surveillance and decision-support systems can lead to defensive responses, which can be viewed as offensive preparations, especially where a history of hostility and weak crisis-communication systems exist. The pace and transparency of AI systems thus can outperform conventional diplomatic and command systems, raising the level of escalation at times of crisis (Singer, 2009; Scharre, 2018; Rafiq, 2021).

As a policy maker, these results bring home the need to work on transparency, mechanisms of building confidence and normative principles under which military AI is used. States that are in conflict areas are supposed to have clear limits of AI utilization, especially the systems that assist in making life or death decisions or exhibiting autonomous decision-making. More focus on human-in-the-loop controls, sharing information and communication channels associated with crisis could be used to reduce risks related to misinterpretation and unintentional escalation. Furthermore, the discussion proposes that states with limited capabilities in technology can adopt selective and unbalanced AI policies on intelligence, surveillance, and decision support instead of engaging in all-spectrum AI equivalence.

These strategies can maintain deterrence and ensure the sustainability of resources and lessening the chance of destabilizing arms competition.

On the whole, the paper proves that AI can act as a multiplier of strategic forces and generator of new weaknesses at the same time. Although AI makes operations faster, more coordinated, and more precise, it further exacerbates uncertainty, increases security dilemmas, and raises the risk of escalation in competitive environments. The relative analysis of Iran-Israel and India-Pakistan proves that AI influence on conflict relations is directly contextual due to factors such as technological capabilities, past conflicts, and institutional policies. Therefore, policymakers should be careful when integrating AI into the military system and consider technological innovation and effective governance, risk management, and regional coordination to maintain strategic stability and avoid unintentional war.

Figure 1: Conceptual map of AI-enabled military applications and implications of their use.



CONCLUSION

The AI-controlled warfare is a strategic multiplier in conflict areas and not a weapon in its own right. The Iran-Israel and India-Pakistan examples demonstrate that advanced countries use AI to monitor, collect intelligence, plan their operations, and provide support, enabling them to have a competitive advantage, whereas less developed ones implement the asymmetric approaches of AI usage to stay on the same level. AI enhances efficiency and deterrence and, at the same time, magnifies security dilemmas and tightens the decision-making timeline, enhancing the chances of misunderstanding and exacerbation. Success in AI application necessitates a futuristic approach, human control, and risk aversion. It has an effect not only based on technology but on past animosity, ideology, and local security dynamics (Singer, 2009; Scharre, 2018; Rafiq, 2021; Khurshid and Zaman, 2023).

REFERENCES

1. Abbasi, R., & Uzzaman, S. (2022). *Strategic stability of South Asia in the age of artificial intelligence*. *Pakistan Horizon*. https://pakistan-horizon.piia.org.pk/index.php/pakistan-horizon/article/download/256/236/243
2. AI-assisted targeting in the Gaza Strip. (2023). *Wikipedia*. Retrieved January 18, 2026, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AI-assisted_targeting_in_the_Gaza_Strip
3. Bousquet, A. (2022). *The eye of war: Military perception from the telescope to the drone*. Bloomsbury Academic.
4. Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal, 9*(2), 27–40.
5. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa
6. Crootof, R. (2015). The killer robots are here: Legal and policy implications. *Cardozo Law Review, 36*, 1837–1915.

7. Gerring, J. (2007). *Case study research: Principles and practices*. Cambridge University Press.
8. IAI Heron. (2023). *Wikipedia*. Retrieved January 18, 2026, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IAI_Heron
9. IAI Searcher. (2023). *Wikipedia*. Retrieved January 18, 2026, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IAI_Searcher
10. International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). (2023). *International humanitarian law and autonomous weapons systems*. Retrieved January 18, 2026, from https://www.icrc.org/en/document/international-humanitarian-law-and-autonomous-weapon-systems
11. Khurshid, T., & Zaman, H. (2023). *The impact of artificial intelligence militarization on South Asian deterrence dynamics*. *BTTN Journal, 2*(2). https://doi.org/10.61732/bj.v2i2.76
12. Masood, M., & Baig, M. A. (2023). Potential impact of lethal autonomous weapon systems on strategic stability and nuclear deterrence in South Asia. *Margalla Papers, 27*(2), 27–43. https://doi.org/10.54690/margallapapers.27.2.173
13. Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research, 42*(5), 533–544. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y
14. Rafiq, A. (2021). *Militarisation of artificial intelligence and future of arms control in South Asia*. Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad.
15. Scharre, P. (2018). *Army of none: Autonomous weapons and the future of war*. W. W. Norton.
16. Singer, P. W. (2009). *Wired for war: The robotics revolution and conflict in the 21st century*. Penguin.
17. South Asia Journal. (2023). *Artificial intelligence and South Asian strategic stability*. Retrieved January 18, 2026, from https://southasiajournal.net/artificial-intelligence-and-south-asian-strategic-stability/
18. Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). SAGE.