AI is everywhere: in your phone, in your fridge and in your toaster. It has probably even written your homework; however, AI has also been increasingly used in warfare and weapons systems. The use of AI has been seen by militaries across the world as being potentially revolutionary in defensive and offensive capabilities; while human rights groups have been increasingly concerned by the lack of a ‘human-in-the-loop’, leading to ethical questions about accountability.

The meteoric rise of AI-augmented weaponry can be primarily attributed to its unparalleled capacity to solve complex problems at a pace far beyond human capabilities. Notably, AI-driven targeting systems exhibit an ability to react to missile onslaughts with remarkable swiftness, surpassing the response time of a human operator in missile defence systems. Moreover, the utilization of AI holds the potential to keep human soldiers stationed at safer distances from the front lines, potentially mitigating casualties and preserving lives in conflict zones.

Furthermore, the precision and accuracy exhibited by advanced AI targeting systems surpass those of human soldiers, potentially leading to fewer civilian casualties and diminished collateral damage during warfare. However, this viewpoint encounters vehement opposition from human rights advocates who express reservations about AI's unreliability in target selection. They contend that since AI, as evidenced by anyone who has used ChatGPT, sometimes fabricates information, it remains unsuitable for involvement in life-or-death decision-making scenarios.

Opponents of AI in warfare further argue that entrusting non-human decision-makers could foster a surge in unethical choices, given machines' limited capacity for moral reasoning compared to humans. The prospect of a misaligned AI mistakenly targeting civilians without avenues for accountability raises profound concerns. Additionally, granting lethal capabilities to AI presents a worrisome precedent, potentially leading to catastrophic consequences if AI were to turn malevolent or fall into malevolent hands.

Another critical argument posits that integrating machines into lethal weapon deployments exacerbates the issue of accountability. In scenarios where AI-initiated strikes result in civilian casualties, the attribution of responsibility becomes a contentious issue. The use of AI in warfare could jeopardize existing international legal frameworks, potentially undermining the prosecution of war crimes through institutions like the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Questions to consider:

- Should AI be used in warfare?

- How can AI be regulated to prevent civilian casualties?

- Are there sectors of warfare in which AI should be completely banned?

- How can international law be updated to reflect this new landscape?

Further reading:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lethal_autonomous_weapon>

<https://unu.edu/article/militarization-ai-has-severe-implications-global-security-and-warfare#:~:text=and%20cyber%20warfare.-,The%20militarization%20of%20AI%20has%20profound%20implications%20for%20global%20security,and%20more%20efficient%20resource%20allocation>.

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/how-militaries-are-using-artificial-intelligence-on-and-off-the-battlefield>