# Policy Brief

2023

Author:
Rebaz Khursheed

# CANADA NEEDS TO DEVELOP POLICY ON THE USE OF AI-BASED WEAPONS

## Issue

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming the world, and Canada must be prepared to address the challenges and opportunities that come with it. However, Canada is lacking a policy on the development and use of AI for military use. As such, it is critical to develop a policy that will guide Canada's position on the use of AI-based weapon systems not only for its armed forces but also dictate its position in use of such weapons internationally.

## Background

Canada is a leader in AI research and development, with a thriving tech industry and a government committed to innovation. In June 2022, Canada tabled the Artificial Intelligence and Data Act, which aims to" protect individuals against a range of serious risks associated with the use of artificial intelligence systems, including risks of physical or psychological harm or biased output with adverse impacts on individuals." (Government of Canada, 2022) However, the policy does not address the use and development of autonomous weapons systems as Canada has never released a formal position on the use and development of such weapons. As a signatory to the United Nations Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, Canada has an obligation to engage in discussions on lethal autonomous weapons systems. Developing a policy on autonomous weapons would demonstrate Canada's commitment to meeting its international obligations and promoting the responsible use of AI. Moreover, by developing such a policy, Canada to contribute to the establishment of responsible and ethical guidelines that ensure AI technologies are used for the benefit of humanity rather than causing harm.

## Why Develop a Policy on the use of AI in Military Context?

1. **Take Leadership:** Developing a policy on AI-based weapons would demonstrate Canada's leadership in the development of ethical and responsible AI, which could enhance Canada's reputation globally. Canada's engagement in discussions around AI-based weapons can help shape the global discourse on this issue and contribute to the development of international norms and standards. Furthermore, developing a policy on AI-based weapons can enhance Canada's credibility as a responsible and ethical actor in the international community, which could have positive implications for Canada's relationships with other countries and organizations.
2. **Encourage Innovation:** By setting clear guidelines for the development and use of AI-based weapons, Canada can promote innovation in this field while also ensuring that these technologies are developed and used in a responsible and ethical manner.

## Recommendations

1.  **Develop a joint working committee between Department of National Defence (DND) and Global Affairs Canada (GAC)** – A working committee comprised of DND and GAC officials to develop a strategic policy that takes into consideration Canada's defence priorities along with its international commitments to work towards a safer world.
2.  **Collaborate with its NATO Allies** - Canada should work with its NATO allies to develop a policy that provides clear guidelines for the development and use of AI-based weapons. This policy should address the ethical, safety, and strategic implications of automated weapons. At the same time, Canada should promote joint research programs and push to establish a common standard on the use and deployment of AI for military applications. Such a policy can contribute to global security and stability by promoting transparency, trust-building, and the adoption of measures that reduce the likelihood of conflicts arising from AI weapon systems.

## References

Charter statement Bill C-27: An act to enact the consumer privacy protection act, the Personal Information and Data Protection Tribunal Act and the Artificial Intelligence and data act and to make consequential and related amendments to other acts. Government of Canada. (2022, November 10). https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/csj-sjc/pl/charter-charte/c27_1.html