I, WARBOT: THE DAWN OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENT CONFLICT

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Payne's work is impressively precise and insightful, leading readers through the hype surrounding technology and the talk of a robotic revolution, particularly in the military realm. The book delves into the intersection of Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems and warfare. With the current use of autonomous drones and robotic tanks on the battlefield, AI is reshaping armed conflicts, and military leaders and policymakers are relying on data analysis to make decisions. These AI-based machines are changing the way humans approach warfare, resulting in an increased likelihood of conflicts.

The reviewed book delves into the history of AI in warfare, highlighting how its early progress was hindered by academic-based research in the 1970s. However, with the rise of computing power and the internet, big data was generated, leading to more advanced automated weapons. While primitive automated weapons have existed since the late 1930s, they could not take evasive action or be redirected. Nonetheless, author Payne credits the success of the Battle of Britain to automation, specifically the radar's integration into a strategic system for anticipation, planning and allocation of fighter resources.

The emergence of warbots, AI-powered platforms with rapid decision-making capabilities, highlights the need to understand the differences between human and AI decision-making. The impact of warbots on conflict depends on various factors, including the evolution of technology and societal attitudes towards war. It is essential to note that the availability of new techniques does not solely drive weapons development but also cultural attitudes towards warfare. Unlike stone hand axes and thermonuclear warheads, AI represents a qualitative shift in how we approach conflict.

The author presents a thought-provoking discussion on the capabilities of warbots, questioning whether they are advanced calculators or able to strategise. Using intelligence analysis and situational awareness, AI can provide valuable insights

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for strategists. However, the author draws three distinct conclusions. Firstly, technology has reached a defining stage where it is valuable enough for countries to consider banning it despite ethical concerns. Secondly, due to their networking abilities, AI has the potential to swarm and operate offensively. Lastly, while AI systems may surpass human tactical skills, they will never be strategists. The author emphasises that even if machines make decisions about violence, the war ultimately remains a human endeavour. This book is a crucial reminder that military AI requires ethical considerations and innovative strategies, not just technological advancements.

In the book, Payne raises essential questions about how to prevent the escalation of machine warfare and the implications for the Art of War. He also ponders the possibility of incorporating biological elements into AI, which has already produced impressive results through combining brain imaging and AI. While the US leads in classic AI research, China is making significant strides in biotechnology, with a more accepting attitude towards genetic manipulation. France has also announced plans to develop enhanced soldiers. These developments raise ethical concerns and highlight the need to consider the long-term consequences of advancing technology.

The argument is that anxiety, rather than overconfidence, is now prevalent due to the uncertainty surrounding AI systems and warbots. It has increased investment, experimentation and potential for arms race and instability. While the world is rapidly entering an era of AI warfare powered by highly advanced computers, it is important to remember that humans are ultimately responsible for these machines. As President Kennedy once said, "Man is still the most extraordinary computer of them all, possessing judgment, nerve and the ability to learn from experience that makes him truly unique."