

EUROPEAN DEMOCRATIC MULTILATERALISM IN SHAPING GLOBAL MILITARY AI GOVERNANCE

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ABSTRACT

In February 2023, during the first global Summit on Responsible Artificial Intelligence in the Military Domain ([REAIM](#)) hosted by the Netherlands, the United States unveiled the [Political Declaration on Responsible Military Use of Artificial Intelligence and Autonomy](#), inviting states worldwide to join this effort. As of December 2023, forty-nine countries joined this initiative including all European Union (EU) member states and all but one NATO members.

The United States has been prompted to take a leadership role in shaping global governance for military AI thanks to its heightened strategic competition with China. However, the different characterization of military AI in the US, coupled with its sense of dissatisfaction towards existing international forums, particularly those influenced by revisionist states like China and Russia, has led Washington to propose the Political Declaration beyond the confines of the UN.

On the other side, the REAIM Summit issued a declaration titled "[Call for Action](#)," which was endorsed by 57 states, including China. The noteworthy characteristic of REAIM lies in its inclusivity and multi-stakeholderism – distinct features that set the REAIM initiative apart from the Political Declaration.

Given the UN's dual role as a platform for overt and covert confrontations between status quo states upholding the current liberal international order and revisionist states advocating

for its overhaul, crafting a universally accepted treaty to regulate the use of AI capabilities presents a formidable challenge, though not an insurmountable one. Thus, this paper advocates for a comprehensive approach, positing that by broadening the discourse on REAIM, Europeans can play a pivotal role in cultivating a shared comprehension of the extensive dimensions of military AI governance. This, in turn, lays the foundation for the development of a convention on military AI.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION

To achieve this objective, the paper suggests that European states (and the EU) adopt democratic multilateralism as a guiding principle.

The Europeans' humble statements such as "[we must listen carefully to the countries of the South](#)" and "[the world is moving in a direction that is not desired by Europe](#)" allude to democratic multilateralism. It embodies values that enhance Europe's standing worldwide, portraying a youthful, empathetic, imaginative, post-colonial, decentered, and feminine stance. This implies that the European governments and the EU have the potential to champion an inclusive, polycentric, and fairer multilateralism based on democratic principles.

In the sphere of military AI, democratic multilateralism ensures Europe's active involvement across the Atlantic while granting Europeans the flexibility to form coalitions with a diverse array of stakeholders in both the Global South and the Global East.