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AI and the Decision to Wage War: Identifying and Mitigating Risks

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What if intelligent machines determined whether states engaged in war? In one sense, this is merely the stuff of science fiction, or long-term speculation about how future technologies will evolve, surpass our capabilities, and take control. In another more nuanced sense, however, this is a highly plausible reality, compatible with the technologies that we have now, likely to be realized in some form in the near future (given observable developments in other spheres), and a prospect that we are willingly, incrementally bringing about. The participants in this panel will analyze the ethical, legal, political, and strategic implications of the eminently conceivable - yet largely neglected - prospect of AI intervening in decision making on the resort to force. They will identify risks that accompany this intervention and recommend means of mitigating them. In doing so, they will seek to redress our collective tendency to focus exclusively on the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on the conduct of war (with our gaze fixed on the battlefield and jus in bello constraints) and demonstrate the need to interrogate the influence of AI on the resort to war (with our attention also directed to decision making in the war room and jus ad bellum considerations).

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