ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE – THE PREMISE OF A NEW REVOLUTION IN MILITARY AFFAIRS

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This article is predominantly forward-looking, exploring the possibility of shaping a sixth Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) by identifying scientific foundations that can support this trend. Although the concept of RMA has been intensively analyzed and exploited in recent decades, the emergence of disruptive technologies, especially in the field of artificial intelligence, raises the possibility of significant transformations not only at the technological level, but also in terms of the doctrines and operational concepts of the armed forces. The interest in artificial intelligence, far from being a novelty in the technological sphere, has reached a level of maturity that justifies analyzing its potential to dominate the future of warfare and "military affairs" as a whole.

Key words: *revolution in military affairs, emerging and disruptive technologies, artificial intelligence, innovation.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Using the term *"revolution"* to describe profound transformations in the military domain is conceptually problematic, as ignoring the temporal dimension of these changes can lead to theoretical confusion. Although the term suggests rapid and radical change, history shows that such transformations in the military often happen over long periods of time, which calls for a critical rethinking of the validity of the concept of *"revolution"* in analyzing military developments.

In the contemporary era, phenomena associated with war and the impact of technology on the military domain have been conceptualized predominantly through two major analytical frameworks: the *"military revolution"* and the *"revolution in military affairs"* (RMA). These concepts, although related, reflect significant differences in the origin, extent and nature of the changes analyzed.

The concept of *"military revolution",* introduced by Michael Roberts in 1956, has been extensively analyzed by numerous researchers over the past few decades. Although no clear consensus has emerged on the defining features of military

revolution, academic debates have highlighted the analytical potential of this concept in investigating structural, organizational, and technological transformations in the military domain.

Military revolutions are *"changes to the framework of war, recasting societies and states in addition to military organizations"* (Morris: 2024), while RMA requires *"the assembly of a complex mix of tactical, organizational, doctrinal, and technological innovations in order to implement a new conceptual approach to warfare or to a specialized sub-branch of warfare"* (Knox, Murray: 2001, p.26). In other words, revolutions in military affairs represent profound and accelerated transformations in the conduct of warfare, driven by technological, doctrinal, and organizational developments that fundamentally influence how armed forces train, conduct operations, and achieve military objectives.

In the context of emerging and disruptive technologies such as artificial intelligence, autonomous drones, nanotechnologies, or advanced cyber capabilities, it becomes all the more important to critically reevaluate the validity and relevance of using the term *"revolution"*. This approach must take into account the complexity of the processes involved and the danger of oversimplifying historical and contemporary realities, especially in an era in which technological innovation is constantly redefining the paradigms of armed conflict.

2. RMA FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF MILITARY ACTIONS

The increasing deployment of high technologies within military structures is not, in essence, a new phenomenon. The concept of *Revolution in Military Affairs*, used as a conceptual alternative to the term *Military-Technical Revolution* (Krepinevich: 2002), refers to a complex process of structural transformation involving significant operational, organizational, and technological changes in the way military actions are conducted. RMA has its origins in doctrinal changes, and its course has been decisively shaped by technological advances. In specific, the combination of systems that collect, process, and transmit information with those that generate and apply military force has led to a profound transformation in how combat is understood and conducted. This close link between technology and doctrine has fundamentally changed both the strategies of action and the current structure of the armed forces.

Theoretical approaches focused on this topic date back to the end of World War II (Murray: 1997, p. 1), but large-scale research began with

the publication of a DoD report in 1992 on the next technical-military revolution, which later became known as the RMA (Bartosiak: 2019, p. 1).

A point of view expressed by Tilford from the US Institute for Strategic Studies stated that RMA represents *"a major change in the nature of warfare brought about by the innovative application of technologies which, combined with dramatic changes in military doctrine, and operational concepts, fundamentally alters the character and conduct of operations"* (Tilford: 1995).

Another point of view accepted in many papers and reports was that of Andrew Marshall, who affirmed that: *"a Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) is a major change in the nature of warfare brought about by the innovative application of new technologies which, combined with dramatic changes in military doctrine and operational and organizational concepts, fundamentally alters the character and conduct of military operations"* (McKitrick et al.: 1998, p. 65).

After thoroughly reviewing the specialized literature, we found that the information presented by MacGregor Knox and Wiliamson Murray in their publication *The dynamics of military revolution, 1300-2050*, is consistent, arguing that, from 1618 to the present, humanity has gone through *five military revolutions*. (Knox, Murray: 2001):

- the rise of the modern state and modern military institutions in the 17th century;
- the French Revolution at the end of the 18th century, which combined the forces of nationalism with military power;
- the industrial revolution, which began at the end of the 18th century and provided national armies with modern technology and logistics;
- The World War I, which represented the synthesis of the forces initiated by the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution;
- the development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missile launch systems towards the end of World War II, which prevented a large-scale war between the superpowers during the Cold War.

Throughout history, states have constantly tried to *"innovate"* in order to consolidate their military superiority. However, what has profoundly transformed the nature of armed conflict over the last two centuries has been not only rapid technological evolution, but also its interaction with operational and organizational changes. The profound technological transformation of

warfare has been the result of a cumulative process, characterized by major progress at different stages in history. From transportation and communication means such as railways, telegraphs, steamships, and rifles (between the Napoleonic Wars and the American Civil War) to the transition to steam-powered armored hulls (late 19th century), each innovation reshaped the way armed conflicts were conducted. Then, the machine gun, aircraft, submarine, and armored vehicles, followed by the internal combustion engine, radio and radar, set the stage for the world conflicts of the 20th century. During and after World War II, nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles totally changed the global strategic balance. Finally, the last decades of the 20th century brought a digital revolution in the military field, through the integration of information technology, microelectronics, lasers, and satellite systems. (Kak: 2000).

An interesting interpretation is provided by Hundley, who argues that an RMA involves a paradigm shift in the nature and conduct of military operations that either renders one or more core competencies of a dominant actor obsolete or irrelevant, or creates one or more new core competencies in a new dimension of warfare, or both (Hundley: 1999. p. 9). The revolution in military affairs involves a profound and systemic change that redefines not only the means of combat, but also the way of thinking, from the tactical to the strategic level.

The academic community's interest in the concept of RMA has never waned, with a constant search for new technological models that could bring about a new *"revolution in military affairs"*. In the paper *A retrospective on a so-called revolution in military affairs, 2000-2020* we find a comparative analysis of the predictions made in the book *Tehnological change and the future of warfare* by the same author, Michael O'Hanlon. Referring to 29 technologies analysed in terms of their revolutionary potential, he highlighted that only computers (hardware and software) met the criteria established in 2000 for revolutionary technologies, and that eight categories would see major advances: *"chemical sensors, biological sensors, radio communications, laser communications, robotics, radio-frequency weapons, nonlethal weapons, and biological weapons"* (O'Hanlon: 2018, p. 1), as shown in Figure 1.

Since we consider O'Hanlon's research results to be of real interest to the present work, in order to anticipate how emerging and disruptive technologies (EDT) in the military field, as well as the time horizon required for further technological developments, we present in Figure 1 the estimates revised in 2018.

Table 1. Estimates of progress in key technologies (O'Hanlon: 2018, p. 6)

Category	Technology	Moderate	High	Revolutionary	Revised, 2018
Sensors	Chemical sensors		X		Moderate
	Biological sensors		X		Moderate
	Optical, infrared, and UV sensors	X			No change
	Radar and radio sensors	X			High
	Sound, sonar, and motion sensors	X			No change
	Magnetic detection	X			No change
	Particle beams (as sensors)	X			No change
Computers and communications	Computer hardware			X	No change
	Computer software			X	No change
	Radio communications		X		Moderate
	Laser communications		X		Moderate
Projectiles, propulsion, and platforms	Robotics		X		Revolutionary
	Missiles	X			High
	Explosives	X			No change
	Fuels	X			No change
	Jet engines	X			No change
	Internal-combustion engines	X			No change
	Rockets	X			No change
	Ships	X			No change
	Armor	X			No change
	Stealth	X			No change

Category	Technology	Moderate	High	Revolutionary	Revised, 2018
Other weapons	Radio-frequency weapons		X		Moderate
	Nonlethal weapons		X		Moderate
	Biological weapons		X		Moderate
	Other weapons of mass destruction	X			No change
	Particle beams (as weapons)	X			No change
	Electric guns	X			No change
	Lasers	X			No change
	Long-range kinetic energy weapons	X			No change

In support of the idea expressed by O'Hanlon, according to which most defense systems require several decades for development, testing and implementation, we illustrate the PATRIOT *(Phased Array Tracking Radar to Intercept on Target)* surface-to-air missile system, presented in a 1994 article in the USA and which was introduced in the Romanian Army in 2020 (Figure 2).

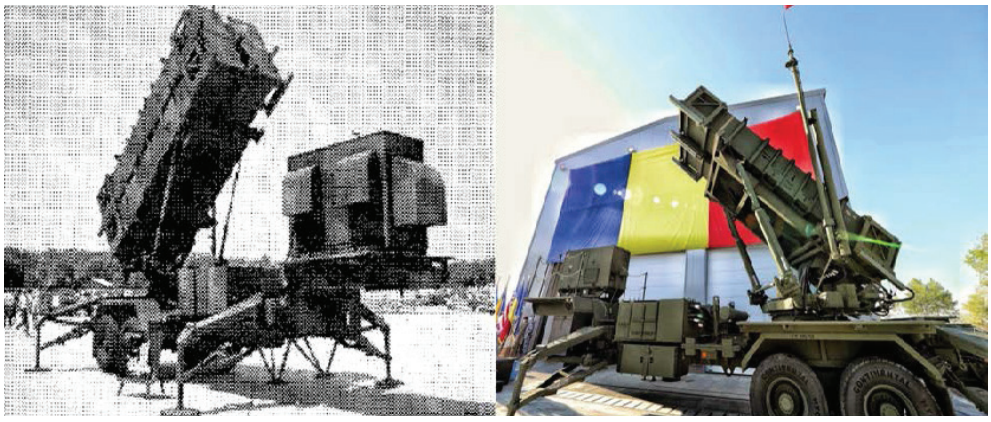

Fig. 1 PATRIOT surface-to-air missile system
(Fitzsimonds, Van Tol: 1994, p. 30; Forțele Aeriene Române: 2020)

The real revolution in military affairs is forcing modern states to use military technological advances to focus on minimizing civilian casualties and collateral damage rather than destroying the enemy. In some cases, this transforms the laws of war designed for totally different types of combat into a political and propaganda weapon in the hands of non-state actors and nations that use asymmetric means of combat (Cordesman: 2014).

Starting from the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) from the perspective of military action, it is necessary to identify, from a wide range of emerging and disruptive technologies, those technologies that are of particular strategic relevance in current armed conflicts. Artificial intelligence (AI) stands out as one of the most influential technologies, with a significant and indisputable presence in modern theaters of operations, particularly in the conflicts in Ukraine, Syria, and Iran over the past decade.

3. PERSPECTIVES OF A NEW RMA DETERMINED BY ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Every revolution in military affairs has been the result of a combination of several innovations in technology, doctrine and organization. Consequently, Figure 3 shows a complex model of the discovery process in which RMAs are the result of multiple innovations. The innovative stages in this model are as follows (Hundley: 1999, pp. 23-24):

- a new technology (or several new technologies) that enables the use of devices and systems that were not previously possible or anticipated;
- a new device based on this new technology that does something that could not be done before;
- a new system, based on the new device, which performs a military task either much better or much differently than before;
- a new operational concept that describes how the new system is used in a particular type of military situation, performing a particular military task either much better or much differently than before, or performing a new task that did not exist before;
- a new doctrine and a new force structure - a doctrine that defines the principles governing the use of the new system and the force structure that provides the military organization necessary to fully realize its potential.

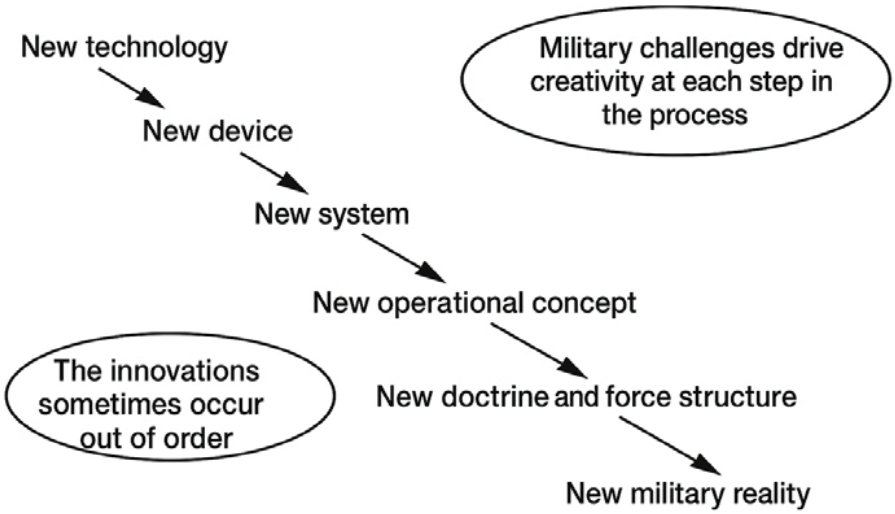

Fig. 2 A model of the RMA process as a result of multiple innovations (Hundley: 1999, p.24)

From the analysis of Figure 3 and the innovative phases listed by Hundley, we observe that unresolved military challenges represent an essential catalyst for innovation in the military transformation process, stimulating the combination of technologies into functional systems and generating the development of operational concepts, doctrines, and force structures. In the absence of such challenges, technological and doctrinal progress is improbable. The RMA process is vulnerable to discontinuities at any phase, from the development of new technology to the adoption of a new military reality. Obstacles such as the absence of an adequate operational concept, cultural resistance to change, or the inability to integrate new devices into coherent systems can block or nullify the entire transformation process.

In the following, the possibility that technologies currently classified as emerging and disruptive may constitute the premises for triggering a new Revolution in Military Affairs will be examined, with reference to the preconditions theorized by Fitzsimonds and Van Tol (1994, pp. 25-26), namely:

- *technological development* - simply inventing a technology is not enough; practical integration into military systems is also necessary;
- *doctrinal and/or operational innovation* - to exploit the full potential of new systems, new technologies must be integrated into new operational concepts and doctrine;

- *organizational adaptation* - the most profound changes also involve bureaucratic changes and institutional acceptance.

The RMA is a direct result of the convergence of three essential conditions, each amplifying the effect of the others.

The development of new technologies over the last decade has been unprecedented. With regard to the contribution of these new technologies to the development of military capabilities, we may consider this criterion to be fulfilled, with examples including the use of artificial intelligence, autonomous systems, quantum technologies, biotechnology, hypersonic systems, space technology, novel materials and manufacturing, as well as energy and propulsion, and next-generation communications networks (NATO: 2023).

In terms of *doctrine*, the changes that have taken place at NATO, European Union, and national levels have resulted in the development of relevant strategies, programs, and doctrinal documents, including the following:

- NATO's Quantum Technologies Strategy (NATO: 2024);
- NATO's revised Artificial Intelligence Strategy (NATO: 2024);
- NATO Science & Technology Strategy (NATO: 2025);
- A Drone Strategy 2.0 for a Smart and Sustainable Unmanned Aircraft Eco-System in Europe (EU: 2022);
- Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence (EU: 2024);
- National Strategy for the Implementation of 5G Technology (Official Gazette of Romania: 2019);
- National Strategy on Artificial Intelligence 2024-2027 (Official Gazette of Romania: 2024);
- National Strategy in the Field of Quantum Technologies for the period 2024-2029 (Official Gazette of Romania: 2024);
- National Strategy for the Development and Support of Digitalization through Digital Innovation Centers in Romania 2024-2027 (Official Gazette of Romania: 2024).

The constant interest of NATO and the EU in the development of EDT *"as evidenced by both their structural and organizational adjustments, as well as the fi nancial resources committed. Moreover, the stated ambition to engage the private sector and industry is expected to accelerate the achievement of the established objectives"* (Doicariu, Acsinte: 2025, p.259).

The third pillar necessary for establishing a new RMA, *organizational adaptation*, is easier to quantify, given that structural and

organizational changes are often public, and here we refer to the establishment of new structures with duties related to EDT. Thus, there are institutions or bodies such as the Office of the Special Envoy for Critical and Emerging Technology (S/TECh) - USA, the NATO Advisory Group on Emerging and Disruptive Technologies, Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA) or the Euro-Atlantic Resilience Centre (E-ARC).

An additional argument is NATO's recognition of cyberspace (NATO Summit: 2016) and outer space (NATO Summit: 2019) as distinct operational domains, highlighting the alliance's expansion and adaptation to the new realities of technology, where AI has made its mark, significantly influencing both domains.

An essential question that arises in this context is the following: *What happens when a disruptive technology becomes so advanced and complex that, once integrated into existing combat systems, it fundamentally redefines the battlefield?*

Just as the advent of nuclear weapons radically changed military doctrines and strategies in the 20th century, *I think that artificial intelligence can be expected to generate a profound reassessment of social and institutional structures in all areas of DIME (diplomatic, information, military, economic).*

Intelligence is increasingly emerging as a driver of structural change in the defense sector, directly influencing the way in which operational concepts and current military organization are being redefined. It is not just a disruptive technology, but a strategic tool with significant potential to reshape military practices and thinking.

Artificial intelligence is a *"force"* in the dynamics of current military conflicts, profoundly influencing military capabilities, planning and resource allocation, and the execution of operations. The implementation of AI in defense infrastructure and military equipment is helping to redefine how states manage their national security and conduct combat operations, marking a paradigm shift in the conduct of warfare. Among the areas where AI is exerting a significant influence on modern warfare are the following (Mocanu: 2024, p.532):

- *Autonomous weapons and systems:* AI has a major role in the development of autonomous drones and unmanned vehicles. These systems are capable of performing reconnaissance, surveillance and combat missions without the need for human involvement;
- *Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR):* AI ensures the processing of large volumes of data

from satellites, sensors, and surveillance platforms, enabling real-time analysis of the enemy, terrain, and potential threats;

- *Cyber warfare:* malware and hacking tools based on artificial intelligence can infiltrate enemy networks, disrupt critical infrastructure, and compromise communications systems (offensive capabilities). Also, machine learning algorithms can detect anomalies in network traffic, anticipate potential vulnerabilities, and automate defensive measures such as neutralizing threats or restricting access (defensive mechanisms);
- *Decision-making process:* AI can assess complex situations on the battlefield, process multiple data sources, and recommend the best decisions or courses of action;
- *Predictive analysis:* AI algorithms can process large amounts of data, including historical battle records, weather patterns, and geopolitical information, to predict enemy movements and intentions. In addition, AI systems can forecast the outcomes of military strategies by simulating different battlefield scenarios and enemy reactions;
- *Automatization of military supply chains*: AI optimizes logistics by managing inventories, forecasting supply demand, and automating the transport and distribution of resources in conflict zones;
- *Information warfare and psychological operations*: Psychological operations based on artificial intelligence can use social media platforms and news channels for these purposes. Artificial intelligence is also used to identify and combat disinformation campaigns by detecting fake content, deepfakes, and tactics used to manipulate social media.

The war in Ukraine provides an unprecedented operational space where military capabilities integrated with artificial intelligence are continuously tested under real combat conditions. This accelerated exposure drives rapid development of technological solutions, stimulated by the constant need for operational efficiency and adequate responses to ever-changing threats. The rapid implementation of AI solutions has highlighted their ability to act simultaneously as force multipliers, laying the groundwork for a profound transformation in the way military operations are conceived and executed.

One of the essential functions of AI in this context is to create a common operational picture by aggregating and correlating data from multiple sources such as sensors, drones, IT platforms, or mobile devices. This capability gives commanders a better understanding of the battlefield and supports accelerated decision-making.

In addition, AI contributes to the simultaneous management of a large number of assets and resources, thereby facilitating decentralized command and increased tactical agility. This type of technological integration has generated multiple practical initiatives in the Ukrainian army, particularly in the field of drone warfare, where AI optimizes both the target identification process and the execution of strikes with increased precision.

These developments increasingly validate the fact that AI is not just a technological resource, but is capable of redefining the balance between speed, accuracy, and lethality in modern conflicts. The Ukrainian case could represent not only an intermediate stage of a new RMA, but also the beginning of an operational paradigm in which superiority is no longer determined exclusively by volume or technique, but by informational and decision-making efficiency. AI is a fundamental technology for the transition from automated systems to autonomous systems, or systems that can decide how to achieve a goal, rather than simply executing algorithms programmed by humans (Bondar: 2025, p.1). Achieving total autonomy in the use of artificial intelligence remains, at present, a goal constrained by technological, legal, and ethical factors. The conflict in Ukraine is a key example of the accelerated implementation of artificial intelligence-based technologies in the military domain. The information and experience gained in this context will significantly shape international debates on the use of AI in defense, influencing the evolution of combat doctrines, ethical norms, and global security policies in the next period (Mamediieva: 2025).

A group of researchers from Germany has highlighted a series of ethical considerations specifically formulated for military applications involving the use of artificial intelligence. These principles include (Anneken M. et al.: 2025, 28):

- *traceability*, which involves ensuring the transparency and comprehensibility of the decision-making processes of AI-based systems;
- *proportionality*, which refers to maintaining an appropriate balance between military objectives and the imperative of complying with humanitarian norms;
- *governability*, which emphasizes the importance of maintaining human control

over decisions generated by autonomous systems;
- *responsibility*, according to which responsibility for actions carried out with the help of AI must always lie with the human operator;
- *reliability*, which aims to develop robust, safe, and predictable AI systems in a military context.

These are some of the ethical principles that will form the basis of studies, scenarios, war games, subsequent exercises, and ultimately military combat systems.

As artificial intelligence-based technologies become increasingly integrated into defense systems, the traditional boundaries between the civilian and military domains are blurring. The result is the formation of a new security ecosystem characterized by technological interdependence, strategic flexibility, and an increasingly evident convergence between civilian innovations and their military applications.

Although there have been debates and contradictions regarding the number of military revolutions that have taken place over time, we agree with the statement that *"technology alone is not sufficient to justify the existence of a military business revolution"* (Vlad, Dumitrescu: 2005, p. 60). The authors highlight that the importance of operational concepts is at least equivalent to that of technological innovation.

A relevant aspect is that, following consultation of the academic databases Google Scholar (2025) and ResearchGate (2025), only one paper was identified that includes the phrase *"the sixth revolution in military affairs"* in its title, namely *The Sixth RMA Wave: Disruption in Military Affairs?* (Raska: 2022), which suggests the novelty and still little explored nature of this concept in the literature.

In an integrated approach, it can be argued that the transformations induced by artificial intelligence contribute to shaping a new wave within the Military Affairs Revolution. The dynamics of these technological developments, correlated with decisions taken at the political-military level, whether anticipatory or reactive, can influence both the operational concepts and the structural characteristics of future armed conflicts.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The transformation of the military is not a singular event, but a continuous, complex, and adaptive process. It should be understood as a permanent evolution, driven by technological advances, doctrinal changes, and organizational restructuring, designed to ensure the efficiency and relevance of the armed forces in a security environment undergoing constant transformation. This perspective, commonly found

in the literature and in institutional discourse on military modernization, emphasizes the progressive and long-term nature of changes in defense.

The accelerated evolution of artificial intelligence technology requires sustained international collaboration to build a regulatory framework capable of balancing innovation with the protection of fundamental human rights. As AI takes on an increasingly important role in the military, governments, international organizations, and defense structures are forced to adapt to a constantly changing reality marked by advanced technologies that can fundamentally transform the nature of conflicts.

AI capabilities in the military context have expanded considerably, from real-time data collection and analysis to the operation of autonomous weapons systems. These advances offer a considerable operational advantage, enabling rapid processing of large volumes of information and a more effective response to threats. However, the integration of these technologies raises serious ethical and legal issues, particularly with regard to responsibility for lethal decisions and compliance with international humanitarian norms.

In this context, the Revolution in Military Affairs is not simply a matter of modernizing equipment, but reflects a profound cultural and conceptual transformation of the military domain. This change aims to achieve a significant strategic advantage in an increasingly complex security environment marked by digitalization, interconnectivity, and volatility.

Although technological innovation is an essential factor in the transformation of the military domain, it is not, in itself, sufficient to generate revolutionary change. A *Revolution in Military Affairs* only occurs when technology is coherently and effectively integrated into doctrine, organizational structures, and operational concepts. If we accept that military change can be profound even in the absence of an accelerated rhythm, interpreting it as an evolutionary process becomes fully justified.

Based on the results obtained through the analysis of the specialized literature, it can be concluded that the identification of a new Revolution in Military Affairs remains an open topic, especially with regard to the critical arguments concerning the integration of artificial intelligence into combat systems.

As stated in the introduction, I would like to reiterate that this article is forward-looking, aiming to analyze the prospect of artificial intelligence becoming the sixth Revolution in Military Affairs in the future.

In my opinion, the impact of artificial intelligence is expected to trigger at least a new wave of RMA, if not a new RMA altogether, with the only unknown being when this transformation will happen.

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