Forum: General Assembly 1

Student Officer(s): HyoJung (Daniel) Yoon, Miguel Pena, Phuong Anh Bui

TOPIC 1: The issue of the regulation of autonomous weapons

LibGuide

I. Introduction to the Topic

The development and use of autonomous weapons began in 1943, as an passive acoustic homing torpedo during World War II. Ever since then within the rapid growth of technology, military forces around the world adopted autonomy into weapon systems. These weapon systems added certain features to weaponry such as acquiring, identification of targets, prioritising selected targets, and so forth. The market value of autonomous weapons has reached $11,565.15 million in 2020 and is expected to rise up to approximately $30,168.14 million by 2030.

The increasing number of autonomous weapons and number of developments threaten international peace. Autonomous weapons use algorithms and Artificial Intelligence (AI) to function as weapons without human intervention. According to the Autonomous Weapons Organization, the largest legal and ethical concerns regarding autonomous weapons are: immorality, threat to security, and lack of accountability. Weapons with algorithms lack capability of comprehending the value of human lives, yet target making decisions are up to such weapons. Hence, with the growth of technology, the production of autonomous weapons is easier, cheaper, and faster; this allows potential for weapons of mass destruction. As all decision making processes are done by the weapons and algorithms, the decision to use such lethal weaponry and forces questions the responsibility and accountability of use of force by autonomous weapons. Other risks and hazards of using autonomous weapons include: unpredictability, escalation, proliferation, lowered barriers to conflict, mass destruction, and selective targeting of groups.

On the other hand, the increasing number of international conflicts highlights the significance and need of autonomous weapons. Autonomy in weaponry in the defence system was described as "much more diverse and less dramatic" by the United States Marine Corps General, Michael Groen. The rule 71 of the International Committee Of Red Cross states that the use of weapons is by nature indiscriminate and is prohibited. It means any weapons with autonomy that behave unpredictably and have unreliable performance are restricted and must not be used. Moreover, the use of autonomous weapons to exterminate a group of people on the basis of their race, gender, nationality and other grounds is already prohibited by existing laws. It is insisted that use of AI and algorithms will reduce the collateral damage and civilian casualties via improved accuracy and surgical attacks.

II. Definition of Key Terms & Concepts

Key term: International peace and security

International peace and security are the cornerstones of General Assembly 1. Many international organisations and member states are contributing and trying to maintain international peace and security. It is defined as actions to identify and support the structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify

peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict. In the case of the United Nations, attempts to keep international peace and security are made through preventive diplomacy and mediation, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, countering terrorism, and disarmament.

Key term: Humanitarian

Humanitarian is a person or an idea that is involved in improving people's lives and reducing suffering. When we are discussing autonomous weapons, there are many existing humanitarian laws that inhabit and control the use of autonomous weapons. These laws are obligated to the urgent adaptation of new international legally binding rules and restrictions on autonomous weapons. Humanitarian laws are expected to highlight the violation of international human rights laws, and apply legal consequences to those who are accountable and responsible for misuse of autonomous weapons.

Key term: Indiscriminate weapons

Indiscriminate weapons are generally weapons that can't be directed at a military object and whose effects can't be limited as required by the international humanitarian laws. For example, anti-personnel landmines or booby traps are indiscriminate weapons or attacks as those weapons can't differentiate between legitimate military targets or civilians. The nature of indiscriminate weapons is striking military objects and civilians or civilian objects without distinction. In the case of autonomous weapons, there could be some difficulties and obstacles to ensure that such weapons are only directed at military targets.

Key term: Digital Dehumanisation

Digital dehumanisation is a term used to describe the process where individuals' data is monitored and allows algorithms and machines to make decisions based on the collected data. During this process, human lives are affected negatively in such forms as exposure to military threats without consent, or usage of algorithms and autonomous decision making are used to determine or refuse administration of social welfare based on the data collected. The degree of dehumanisation significantly increases when the decision made by such algorithms involves injury or death, or ultimately makes a direct contribution in casualties of citizens.

III. Key Stakeholders

Key stakeholder 1: the United Nations (UN)

The foundation of the United Nations is based upon the maintenance of international peace and security. The United Nations, especially the General Assembly 1 has the responsibility and obligation to collaborate with other UN bodies to ensure the peace and security within all member states of the United Nations. The increasing production and usage of autonomous weapon systems require greater attention from the United Nations and regulations must be established in order to minimise the misuse and discrimination done by such weapons. Both the UN and the ICRC are aiming for setting clear restrictions on the use of autonomous weapons by 2026 through negotiations with political leaders.

On the 5th of October, 2023, the UN secretary general and the ICRC president came to an agreement to enhance the prohibitions on the autonomous weapon systems. The main reasons for this proposal were "humanitarian, legal, ethical and security concerns." As the accessibility and availability of these weapons have been amplified over years, the responsibilities and burdens that the UN has to carry are great. The UN has been making several attempts to reduce these increasing accessibilities in the past conferences such as The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

Key stakeholder 2: the International Committee Of Red Cross (ICRC)

The International Committee Of Red Cross (ICRC) has been an active stakeholder of international humanitarian laws and has one of the biggest contributions to the existing restrictions of automated weapons. As the organisation has a long history of establishing international policies regarding the use of autonomous weapons, their previous and current international laws and decisions made are good instances and examples that member states must take into account. When the regulations of these weapons are being discussed, the ICRC will play a vital role as it has provided such insights as the limitations of international humanitarian laws, key stakeholders of such laws, and the urgent need of stronger regulations.

For decades and even until now, the ICRC has been in the opposition of using autonomous weapons. In September, the ICRC regional director for Americas brought a close attention to the ICRC's perspective on the increasing use of automated weapon systems during the CARICOM convention. This was to ratify the legal regulation of such weapons as anti-personnel autonomous weapons that are intentionally designed and used to cause casualties of human lives. The regional director made clear that the use of weapons must be distinctive as it must not injure civilians, but only military targets or objects. The director furthermore urged CARICOM member states to prohibit and regulate autonomous weapons and "to negotiate and adopt new legally binding instruments on autonomous weapons."

Key stakeholder 3: Russia and Ukraine

Russo-Ukraine war initially started in 2014, and after years of time, Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022. Both Russia and Ukraine are in a military conflict that has influence on millions of lives and further on the global economy. It is one of the biggest invasions ever since World War II and it actively involved and adopted developed weaponry technologies such as AI weapons or autonomous weapons.

In March 2022, there was evidence of Russia's use of drones that adopted and operated upon algorithms and AI. It did not only target military objects but also caused casualties. First it was 2 citizens in Kyiv, Ukraine. The number of citizens injured and casualties continuously increased as the war progressed. It was not only Russia that has actively adopted an autonomous weapon system in this war. The Ukraine military also has been actively using missiles and drones that function according to algorithms. The regulation of autonomous weapons, or such movements will directly affect both Russian and Ukrainian militaries. The invasion in 2022 has clearly shown the urgent need of prohibition, and both Russia and Ukraine are key stakeholders of this issue as they actively raised the issue of autonomous weapons and casualties.

Key stakeholder 4: Nations that actively develop autonomous weapons

The main nations that have adopted the autonomous system into their weaponry are the U.S, China, Russia, South Korea, France, Germany, the U.K, Sweden, and Italy. These nations' developments contribute to the accessibility of autonomous weapons, and they take the majority size of the weapon market. There may be difficulties in regulating the development of autonomous weapons, but considering those nations' market power and influence on the autonomous weapon markets, it will be vital to have any sort of prohibition on developments to reduce the accessibility to those weaponry.

On the other hand, negotiations with these member states could lead to a successful progress of restricting weapons with autonomous systems, but only the faulty ones that do not always function in the expected way. The further research and development from these nations may be able to improve the accuracy of the weapons, resulting in less casualties of citizens.

IV. Key Issues including Background Information

Key Issue 1: The increasing military conflicts

There are numerous military conflicts happening in the world and the increased access to autonomous weapons enable wars and conflicts to occur much easier. It is not possible to prevent all wars from happening, but the barrier to enter the autonomous weapon market and difficult access to such weapons will be able to decrease the duration of military conflicts, the size, and casualties. However, all member states must contemplate the potential benefit that increase in quality of automated weaponry may reduce the number of casualties, and minimise the influence of weapons on civilians.

Regardless of potential benefits, there are still military conflicts that involve usage of autonomous weapons. There is a correlation between the number of military conflicts and weaponry, as the increasing number of wars and conflicts occur, more nations could start manufacturing weapons with autonomous systems, and the increased number of autonomous weapons could result in an increase in military conflicts.

Key Issue 2: Misuse/abusement of autonomous weapons

As it is easier and faster to produce and use autonomous weapons due to fast growth of advanced technology, a military group that does not take any responsibility for their actions or consequences are able to obtain autonomous weapons. The use of autonomous weapons lacks accountabilities, which means the casualties caused by their usage will not be questioned or have legal consequences. Terrorist groups such as ISIL, and some nations such as Iran, Sudan, and Syria which are all designated as sponsors for terrorist groups, keep producing weaponry and support these groups without any consequences.This concerns the global community and alarms all member states.

Key Issue 3: Breaching the international humanitarian law

The international humanitarian law is a set of laws, or rules that are made for the sake of humanitarianism and it is to protect people who are not involved in hostilities and to inherently prohibit the impact of armed conflict. It is only applied to military or armed conflicts. Autonomous weapons breach this law via indiscriminate characteristics of automated weapons, causing superfluous injuries, and

cause casualties of people who are not military targets. The international humanitarian law is to protect civilians and ensure the humanitarian treatment for citizens; if it can't be kept then the UN body and member states won't be able to maintain international peace within the global community.

V. Timeline of Resolutions, Treaties, and Events

Date	Description of event
1864	The Swiss government with 16 states agreed upon creating the international humanitarian law at the Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armies in the Field.
1977	At Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions, although it was vague, the idea and draft of the modern international humanitarian law was established.
1980	The U.N adopted the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, which originally included non detectable fragments. Several amendments have been made to include diverse types of weapons.
2020	The first autonomous weapon was made by the Turkish military and used in Libya during its civil war. Drones attacked human targets, which were soldiers of the Libyan National Army.
2022	Russia invaded Ukraine, and both militaries actively adopted the use of drones and missiles controlled by algorithms and AI, and some other weapons which were fully automated. It was the first war in the 21st century that made the issues of autonomous weapons come to surface.

VI. Possible Challenges & Solutions

Development and research of autonomous weapons: One of the biggest challenges would be ensuring the restriction of the development of autonomous weapons. The most developed countries such as the U.S, China, Russia, or South Korea might make an attempt to not be bound to such restrictions or regulations. There has to be an international organisation for the development of autonomous weapons which could include all member states. This could allow nations to have the same research objective of improving the accuracy of autonomous weapons and reduce the number of casualties of citizens.

Supply of autonomous weapons and terrorist groups: Another issue could be the regulation of autonomous weapon production. As mentioned, nations that sponsor terrorist groups do not experience any legal consequences for being involved in breaching the international humanitarian law. This means the humanitarian law must be enhanced and the legal consequences must take place to maintain international peace and security. This will require cooperation of all member states and especially nations that are related to the production and supply of autonomous weapons.

Reinforcing the international humanitarian law: Reforming the international humanitarian law is essential in order to reinforce the legal obligation and consequences that will affect the member states. The issue arises when the legal consequences have to be made after member states breach the

international humanitarian law. Member states must contemplate a way to establish chastisements that will be fair and accepted to other member states.

VII. Recommendations for Resolution Writing including Research

Delegates are encouraged to have insightful information and perspective regarding the current situation of the world where the number of casualties rise every day all around nations, and evidence of use of autonomous weapons is clear. Although the limitations and faults of autonomous weapons are so visible and many organisations try to regulate the usage, delegates still should contemplate why such weapons are still being used to this day. Despite the casualties of civilians and dehumanisation, it is still true that autonomous weapons are still more accurate and suitable to target specific military targets and minimise impacts on citizens when compared to mass destructive weapons such as hydrogen bombs or chemical bombs.

It will be ideal to refer to current armed conflicts around the world, as technology advances, access to automated weapons is easier, and it is simpler and quicker for military conflicts to occur. Throughout the research, delegates may realise the limitations of current approach to regulations of autonomous weapons, and delegates are expected to discuss such ways to overcome challenges and ensure international peace and security.

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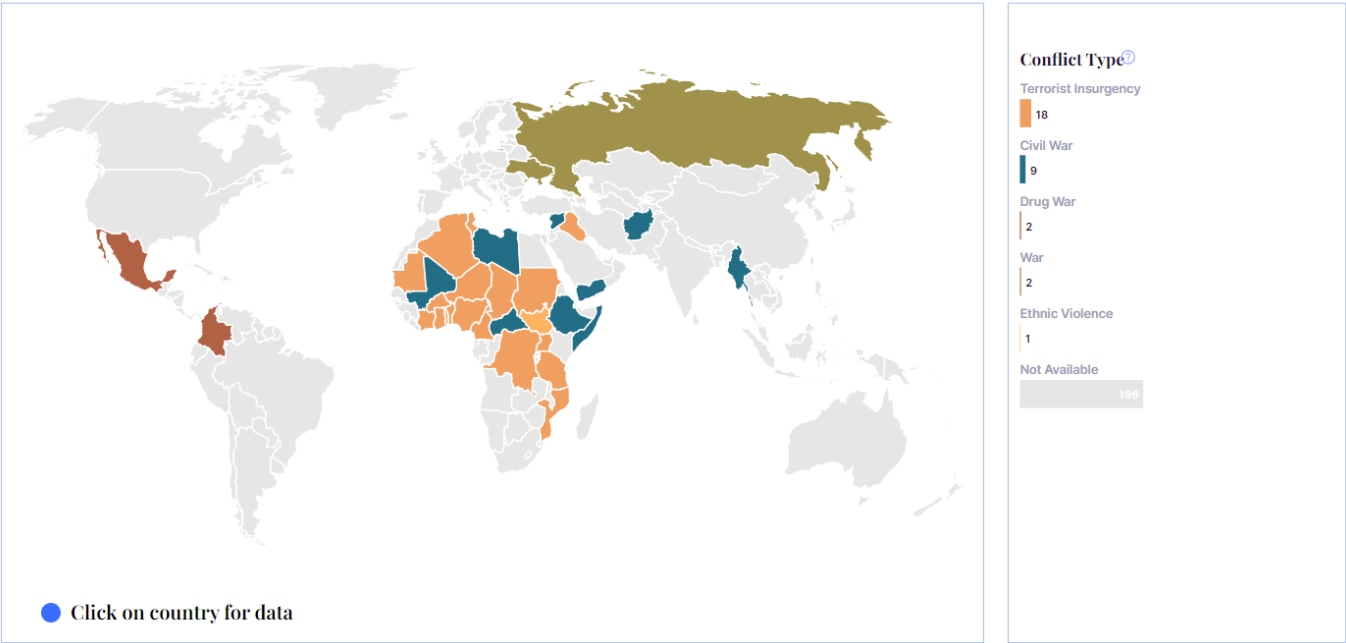"Weapons systems with autonomous functions used in Ukraine." *Automated Decision Research*,

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IX: Additional Resources

https://wisevoter.com/country-rankings/countries-currently-at-war/

Conflict Type

Terrorist Insurgency — 18

Civil War — 9

Drug War — 2

War — 2

Ethnic Violence — 1

Not Available — 196

● Click on country for data

The global artificial intelligence in military market

$18.82 billion

$6.26 billion

2017   2025
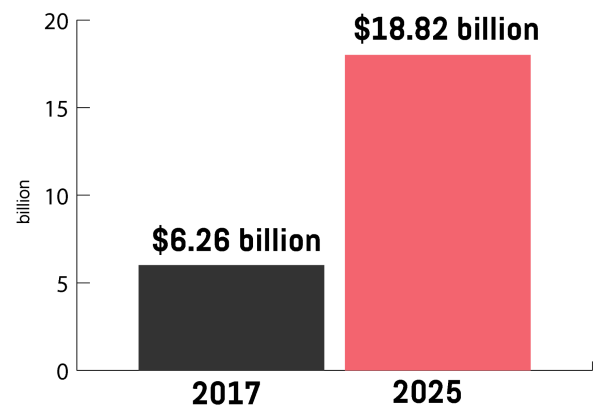
Source: "Artificial Intelligence in Military Market by Offering (Software, Hardware, Services), Technology (Learning & Intelligence, Advanced Computing, AI Systems), Application (Information Processing, Cyber Security), Platform, Region - Global Forecast to 2025," *MarketsandMarkets*, 2018

Should Killer Robots Be Banned?

Share of adults who somewhat/strongly oppose lethal autonomous weapons systems in war, in 2021

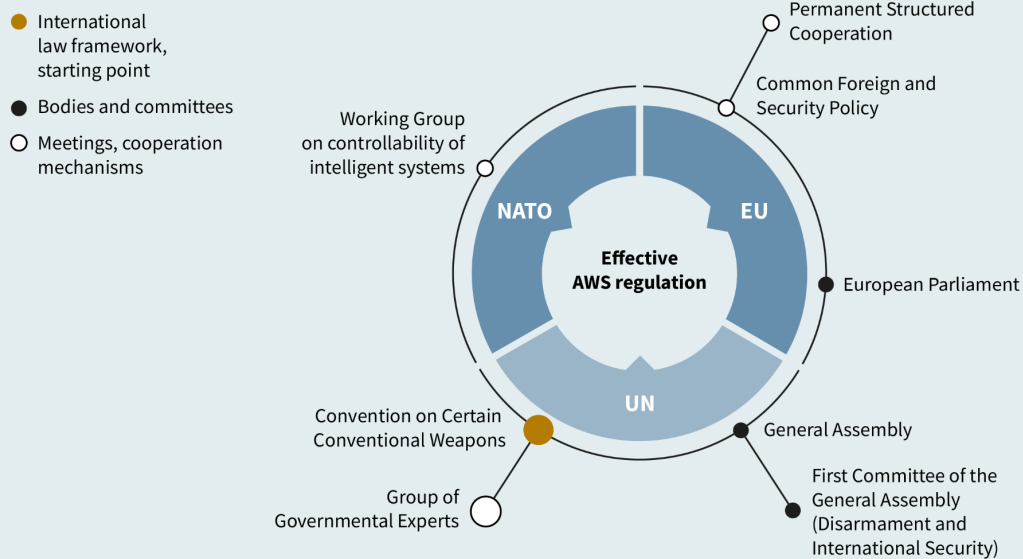| Country	Percentage
Sweden	76.1%
Turkey	73.2%
Hungary	70.4%
Germany	67.8%
Mexico	66.3%
Spain	65.8%
South Korea	64.8%
Average Ø	**61.3%**
Japan	59.4%
Great Britain	56.3%
U.S.	55.4%
China	52.5%
France	47.3%
India	35.7%
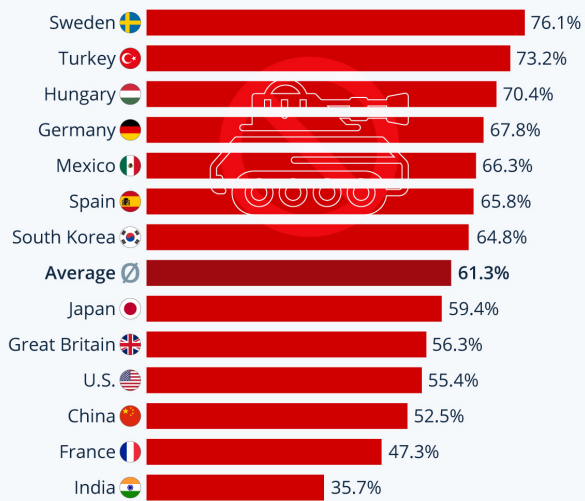
20,505 respondents (16-74 y/o) surveyed Nov 20, 2020-Jan 8, 2021 in 28 countries.
Sources: Ipsos, Human Rights Watch Campaign to Stop Killer Robots

statista

International forums on regulation of autonomous weapons systems (AWS)

- International law framework, starting point
- Bodies and committees
- Meetings, cooperation mechanisms

Working Group on controllability of intelligent systems

Permanent Structured Cooperation

Common Foreign and Security Policy

NATO

EU

Effective AWS regulation

European Parliament

UN

Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons

Group of Governmental Experts

General Assembly

First Committee of the General Assembly (Disarmament and International Security)

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