Committee: Security Council

Issue: Question of automation of war

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Introduction to the Issue

As we are near to the end of the second decade of the 21st century, our world is evolving each and every day. In the year 2019, perhaps Isaac Asimov's fictional world in his sci-fi classic, *I, Robot*, seems more realistic than ever before. Therefore, Asimov's "Three Laws of Robotics" should be taken into consideration. These laws are: "A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm." "A robot must obey orders given it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the First Law." "A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law."

These three laws should not be only implemented to robots such as Aibo or Sophia, but instead should be implemented to any and all devices that do not demand human interference. The possibility of the usage of autonomous weapons in military is rapidly increasing. Currently, the most notable usage can be seen in terms of drones but in the near future, we can have strong militaries filled with "killer robots". Although the dangers and the negative impacts these robots can have are clear, there is one strong argument that can be made in favour of the creation of these machines and that is decreasing the number of people dying in combat. If two nations, jammed with "killer robots" in their military come face to face in a battlefield, the number of human casualties would decrease greatly. However, this can only be the case if both sides are using these robots because otherwise, this would not be a war but a genocide instead.

Currently we are living in a world where people don't fully trust automated vehicles that do not require human control, so how can we trust machines to roam in the middle of war zones? However, back in 1940s, the world witnessed the death of about 50 million people during the Second World War, so with 80 years of technological improvements, what might these numbers be or can this number decrease massively if there are only machines out in the battlefield? These are questions every delegate should keep in mind during the process of writing their clauses.

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Involved Countries & Organizations

United States of America

As one of the if not the biggest military in the world, USA's views on such a topic should be concerning each and every nation. The US policy on the usage of autonomous weapons is positive. They think that it is yet to soon to have clear a jurisdiction and a possible prohibition on such technologies as there is still a huge room for development. They also address that there could be many positive effects of such devices and that they are not as "evil" as they are portrayed to be. They support the idea that with the proper interfaces that are user friendly, autonomous weapons could be highly beneficial in the future of combat. They also specifically mentioned the possible advantages of autonomous weapons which will be used for defence.

Furthermore, the US military greatly benefits from the usage of Unmanned Arial Vehicles (UAVs) or more commonly known as "drones" and has about 7000 of them in their military. These machines are used mostly on the "fight against terrorism" in the Middle East and a possible prohibition on such vehicles would be detrimental to their military force.

Russia

It should be no surprise that Russia is one of the top nations which benefit from these weapons. They also have one of the biggest research being done in order to develop such weapons. Since the end of World War II, the world has been witnessing two huge powers, Russia and US, battling in many different aspects, ranging from nuclear arsenals, to outer space and the area of autonomous weapons is no exception. So much so that President Vladimir Putin said: "Whoever becomes the leader in this sphere will become the ruler of the world."

United Kingdom

Unlike their biggest ally in the international stage, the US, the UK's stance on the usage of autonomous weapons are not so positive. However, one of the biggest problems concerning the UK and autonomous weapons is an uncertainty in the description of said weapons. Perhaps the negative attitude of the UK is because of this uncertainty. They have stated that such weapons still do not exist, and even if they were to exist one day, they would be against the usage of them. Clearly this understanding is very different as to other nations and shows that a clear description is in need. However, despite all this, a recent study has

uncovered the fact that the British Ministry of Defence is fully funding research regarding the development of such weapons. Also, Campaign to Stop Killer Robots have shown the UK as one of the leading contributors to the development of these weapons

China

Among the Permanent members (P5) of the United Nations, (China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, United States) China was the first country to offer the creation of a new international law regarding the issue, signalling a negative approach to the usage of these weapons. However, just months after this proposition, in the United Nations General Assembly, China has called for responsible usage of autonomous weapons which will meet the restrictions set by the UN charter and laws of armed conflicts. This abrupt change in their policy is most likely due to the rapidly increasing arsenal and research resources in other member nations, most notably the remaining four nations of the P5.

Germany & France

The two nations are working together on this issue where they have come to the conclusion that a prohibition is unnecessary at this point and current humanitarian laws and the UN charter is sufficient enough to regulate the issue. This stance is nearly the same as other nations with strong militaries that were mentioned previously.

Campaign to Stop Killer Robots

This is the biggest campaign regarding the issue and is supported by 89 different Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), The European Parliament and 26 countries. These countries are as follows:

Algeria, Argentina, Austria, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, Ghana, Guatemala, Holy See, Iraq, Mexico, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, State of Palestine, Uganda, Venezuela, Zimbabwe

Detailed Analysis of the Issue

In this section both advantages and disadvantages of autonomous weapons will be explained both by technical and ethical aspects.

Technical Advantages

Perhaps most of the advantages autonomous weapons might have is ethical ones therefore there are not many technical advantages these weapons can have. However, this fact

can easily change in the near future with the proper research and development seeing that the systems are currently quite young.

Technical Disadvantages

Unlike the previous sub-section, there can be many technical disadvantages for autonomous weapons. First of all, if we go back to Asimov's "Three Laws of Robotics", a possible mishap in the Second Law could be a great danger for these weapons. If the device requires human assistance at all, it should have the necessary software and hardware to obey the orders and not act on its own and disobeying human orders. However, that is basically the main appeal of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and autonomous weapons, the ability to "think" and act on its own. So, would this freedom lead to many greater problems, or the exact opposite?

Ethical Advantages

Perhaps the strongest case in favour of autonomous weapons is the fact that the number of causalities in a possible war will decrease greatly if there are "killer robots" in the battlefields rather than breathing human beings. Also, we must not forget that weapons are not only used for offensive purposes but they are used defensively as well, so the wide spread usage of these weapons in defensive systems could also be highly beneficial for the sake of civilians in general.

Another advantage could be seen in post conflict areas. A huge problem nearly every soldier suffers from is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and it is a really tough disorder to treat. Veterans are known to suffer from it all throughout their life after returning from the battlefield and sometimes this disorder can even turn out to be fatal. Another post conflict advantage might be seen in an environmental basis. Although this might seem like a long stretch and is not the first thing that comes to mind when taught of autonomous weapons and wars in general, environment also suffer greatly from warfare. With the elimination of human beings from battlefields, we can also eradicate the alarming rates of human waste in combat zones.

Ethical Disadvantages

In opposition to ethical advantages, there could also be many arguments made against this issue on moral grounds. For example, one of the biggest distinctions between a human being and a robot is the fact that human beings can process emotions where robots

with a motherboard instead of a brain and a heart cannot. This huge difference could be seen in action where for example a sniper has to pull the trigger and shoot a child in enemy trenches. For a human being with actual emotions, this is a really tough decision to make and pulling that trigger is really not that easy. However, for a robot, pulling that trigger is just a simple command which it will obey without any hesitation. The fact that these machines can act so coldblooded is seen as a huge threat for many people and that is one main reasons why they are against the automation of war.

List of Important Events

Date	Event
12 September 1916	The first ever unmanned aerial vehicle was used during World War I by the US.
1918-1919	The U.S Navy conducted the first experiments on guided missiles
1961-1975(Vietnam War)	During the war, laser guided smart bombs are used for the first time ever.
1991	Smart bombs are once again used by the US, this time during the Gulf War.
28 July 2015	"Autonomous Weapons: an Open Letter from AI&Robotics Researchers" was created and signed by many.
13 April 2018	"Campaign to Stop Killer Robots" was created and signed by many.

Past Resolutions and Important Documents

Although the European Parliament has submitted a resolution on this topic, there still hasn't been a United Nations (UN) resolution on the matter. Perhaps the reason for this is because the issue is still quite young and there is still little development. However, there

should be some lessons taken from past events and the issue should be tackled in order to come up with feasible solutions before changing the warzones forever for the worse.

As to important documents, the previously mentioned "Campaign to Stop Killer Robots" is the most important campaign regarding the issue as it has a widespread international support. Also, there is an "Open Letter from AI&Robotics Researches" which states that there are many possible advantages of AI and if used in a positive way it can benefit humanity in many ways but the automation of war has many potential threats and that it should not turn into an arms race similar to nuclear armament. This open letter is endorsed by many influential people in this subject such as: Elon Musk, the late, great Stephen Hawking, Steve Wozniak, and many more.

Past Attempts to Solve the Issue

Once again, this issue is still not quite internationally widespread as it is still in the development process for many nations and therefore, there hasn't been the need to have concrete attempts for a solution. Perhaps the biggest action taken is the aforementioned "Campaign to Stop Killer Robots". However, this doesn't mean that the world stage doesn't care about this issue and will stay silent and ignore it. If the research and resources increase rapidly over the few upcoming years, autonomous weapons and the automation of war can easily become one of the major talking points of the global stage.

Possible Solutions

There are many clauses delegates can come up with in order to find a solution to this issue as long as it doesn't contradict with their country's policies. First of all , every delegate must have a clear understanding of their respective nation's stance on this issue as there is a very distinctive difference between the two opposing sides of the issue.

To talk about specific ideas, perhaps the delegates should first focus on coming up with a definite description of the term "autonomous weapons" as there seems to be some misunderstanding regarding the meaning of the word because it is way better to fix any possible problems beforehand, in order not to face any more issues later on.

Furthermore, delegates could also submit clauses where there are restrictions and/or guidelines to current and/or future research in order to keep the systems in a controlled

manner. However, delegates should also be careful as this could easily be interpreted as a breach to country's sovereignty and also all P5 members are in favour of developing these technologies.

Another issue with this question is the lack of a treaty. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the number one document when it comes to the issue of nuclear armament. It has clear guidelines and most importantly, states which countries can have nuclear arsenals. This should also be the case with autonomous weapons. If we are really going to live in a world where battlefields are filled with "killer robots", then we must have clear restrictions and guidelines before it is too late.

These are just some of the few examples of ideas delegates can use while writing their clauses and by no means, these are the only subtopics of this question. There are many other ideas delegates can and will come up with.

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