Forum: Security Council

Question of: Examining the challenge of lethal autonomous weapons

Student Officer: Max Ove Fehlinger

Position: Main Chair

Email: max.fehlinger@gym-meiendorf.de

The rapid growth of (fully autonomous weapons) technologies, especially those with lethal capacities and those with decreased levels of human control, raise serious concerns that have been almost entirely unexamined by human rights or humanitarian actors.

— Philip Alston, Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions[1]

I. Description of the Issue

II. General Description

Examining the challenge of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS) is not an easy task. In recent years and with the further development of Artificial Intelligence (AI), this issue has rose to national and international attention. The advantages and disadvantages of this quickly developing field are still – and will continue – to be unknown. Currently, the media is flooded with highly sensationalized terms and visualizations, such as with movies like "The Terminator". Therefore, most discussions were mostly focused on whether there should be a ban on LAWS and how LAWS could comply with International Humanitarian Law (IHL). These views are differing vastly, depending on the interest group in question. However, those discussions prove to be pretty hard to lead, as there is currently no agreed upon definition, of what LAWS actually are and the definitions from different countries have a vast range.[2] Therefore, the global community is not entirely sure, if LAWS would comply with IHL, or if only certain types of weapons systems would do so.

---

[1]General Assembly United Nations, "Interim Report of the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions," August 23, 2010, https://undocs.org/A/65/321.

[2]Bonnie Docherty, *Losing Humanity: The Case against Killer Robots* (Amsterdam Berlin: Human Rights Watch, 2012).

III. The Question of Weapons Reviews

What the international community could agree upon, is that there should be a rigorous review process of LAWS before they are allowed into service. Those weapons reviews are mostly based on Article 36 of the Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions, which ensures the weapons systems comply with IHL.[3] The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has already called for states to establish national mechanism for review processes and is available to advise states on these matters.[4] The weapons review needs to be transparent, even though most states keep their processes closed due to military concerns. A transparent review process would, however, greatly increase the trust by other nations into the process and allow for cooperation on reviews and help for states with less knowledge on those procedures.[5]

As many reports have already pointed out, a complete weapons review should consider five question to determine whether the creation or selling of certain weapons is in conformance with IHL:

Firstly, it should be checked that the weapon does not violate any current rules of law, treaty obligations or is otherwise prohibited from use. Autonomy in general is not prohibited by IHL, as it could also lessen collateral damage or might reduce the risk of long-term impacts on the civilian population. However, the autonomy needs to be checked first, if it also complies with International Humanitarian Law.

Secondly, the review process should determine whether the weapon's intended use is calculated to cause unnecessary harm. Currently, there is no agreed upon international definition of unnecessary suffering and it needs to be judged on a case-by-case basis.

Thirdly, weapons need to be indiscriminate. If they are, for example, specifically designed to attack civilians, those weapons would not pass the review and need to be banned.

Furthermore, if the weapon is intended, or may be expected, to cause widespread, long-term and severe damage to the natural environment, it should also not be allowed to be manufactured or sold.

Lastly, any likely future developments of the weapons and international law should be considered for a weapon to be certified. Especially in compliance with International Humanitarian Law, the states national policies on autonomous weapons should be in conformance.[6]

---

[3]Docherty.
[4]Docherty.
[5]Docherty.
[6]Docherty.

In general, it is important to highlight that robots and other systems should already be reviewed before the final product is produced and not just individual components. The sooner such a review is triggered in the product development cycle the more likely states are to give up on unlawful weapons, in comparison to giving up fully developed weapons – paid for by a lot of money.[7]

IV. Compliance with International Humanitarian Law

If LAWS are in compliance with International Humanitarian Law is often disputed. The key points are that robots would not be restrained by human emotions and the capacity for compassion, therefore being unable to provide an important check on the killing of civilians that human soldiers still possess. A child with a water gun should not be seen as a threat to soldiers, however the question is how good an artificial intelligence can understand this situation and not shoot the innocent child.[8] In general, combatants must be able to distinguish between the civilian population and other combatants. Attacks that fail to distinguish are indiscriminate and unlawful. Those distinctions might often be hard to undertake, as combatants often blend in with civilian population to be spotted later. Those situations are very hard for robots to understand.[9]

Furthermore, robots are immune from emotional factors, such as fear and rage, that can cloud judgment, distract humans from their military missions, or lead to attacks on civilians.[10]

Continuing, even the most hardened troops can eventually turn on their leader if ordered to fire on their own people. A leader who resorted to fully autonomous weapons would be free of the fear that armed forces would rebel. Robots would not identify with their victims and would have to follow orders no matter how inhumane they were.[11]

Critics further question the effectiveness of the existing limited human oversight. Currently, depending on the type of weapons, human operators either remote-control the weapons or are monitoring decisions made by the vehicles. The next step will be to grant these systems control over launching their own attacks. This scheme is also known as Human-out-of-the-loop.[12]

---

[7]Docherty.
[8]Docherty.
[9]Docherty.
[10]Docherty.
[11]Docherty.
[12]Docherty.

V. The Question of Accountability

The gradual replacement of humans with fully autonomous weapons could make decisions to go to war easier and shift the burden of armed conflict from soldiers to civilians in battle zones. Accountability in such cases serves at least two functions: it deters future harm to civilians and provides victims a sense of retribution. If a fully autonomous weapons system commits an unlawful action, the question remains who is help accountable for that action. Four different scenarios come to mind, none of them really working. Firstly, the soldiers that deployed the weapon. Since the soldiers did not give the command to shoot a specific target, for example, they also did not kill that other person. Commands who give orders on kills should also not be held accountable, as they are currently also not held accountable for the actions of their subordinates, except they knew that the soldiers were going to break certain agreements. The next person up the chair are programmers. However, programmers can also not predict with a complete certainty which situation is happening in a complex battlefield scenario and what the correct answer to that is. Training an artificial intelligence also takes away responsibility from the programmer even further. Private weapons manufactured are not typically punished for how their weapons are used and therefore also fall out of the responsibility raster. The last option – punishing the robot itself – is also completely nonsensical as it wouldn't deter the robot from committing more crimes in the future. Furthermore, the part where nobody is held accountable is not easy to explain to associates of victims and punishing a robot will not help in that matter.[13]

VI. Importance of the Issue

Over the past decade, the number and type of unmanned or robotic systems developed for, and deployed in, armed conflict and law-enforcement contexts has grown at an astonishing pace. The speed, reach, capabilities and automation of robotic systems are all rapidly increasing. Unmanned technologies already in use or in later stages of development — including unmanned airplanes, helicopters, aquatic and ground vehicles — can be controlled remotely to carry out a wide array of tasks: surveillance, reconnaissance, checkpoint security, neutralization of an improvised explosive device, biological or chemical weapon sensing, removal of debris, search and rescue, street patrols, and more. They can also be equipped with weapons to be used against targets or in self-defense. Some of these technologies are semi-automated, and can, for example, land, take off, fly, or patrol without human control. Robotic sentries, including towers equipped with surveillance capacity and machine guns, are in use at the borders of some countries. In the foreseeable future, the technology will exist to create robots capable of targeting and killing with minimal human involvement or

---

[13]Docherty; United Nations, "Interim Report of the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions."

without the need for direct human control or authorization.[14] The Secretary General is currently working on a new policy called the "New Agenda for Peace", which will also call for negotiations to be concluded by 2026 on a legally binding instrument to prohibit lethal autonomous weapons systems that function without human control or oversight, and which cannot be used in compliance with international humanitarian law.[15]

VII. Summary of the Issue

In conclusion, fully autonomous weapons could put civilians at greater risk during wars. These weapons wouldn't be able to follow basic rules of international humanitarian law, would weaken other protections for civilians, and would make it harder to hold anyone accountable for the casualties they cause. Although fully autonomous weapons aren't here yet, technology is quickly advancing in that direction. These kinds of weaponized robots might be possible within a few decades, and militaries are increasingly focused on developing them. Before it gets even harder to change direction, states and scientists should urgently review and regulate the development of technology related to robot autonomy.[16]

The Secretary General of the United Nations closes his statement to the Security Council to Ensure Transparency, Accountability, Oversight, in First Debate on Artificial Intelligence with the following and very fitting words:

> I urge (the Security) Council to exercise leadership on artificial intelligence and show the way towards common measures for the transparency, accountability, and oversight of AI systems. We must work together for AI that bridges social, digital and economic divides, not one that pushes us further apart.

> I urge you to join forces and build trust for peace and security. We need a race to develop AI for good: to develop AI that is reliable and safe and that can end poverty, banish hunger, cure cancer and supercharge climate action [and] an AI that propels us towards the Sustainable Development Goals. That is the race we need, and that is a race that is possible and achievable. Thank you.

---

[14]United Nations, "Interim Report of the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions."
[15]Secretary General, "Secretary-General Urges Security Council to Ensure Transparency, Accountability, Oversight, in First Debate on Artificial Intelligence," *United Nations*, July 18, 2023, https://press.un.org/en/2023/sgsm21880.doc.htm.
[16]Docherty, *Losing Humanity*.

VIII. Definition of Key Terms

IX. Robots

Automatic robot as one that carries out a pre-programmed sequence of operations or moves in a structured environment. A good example is a robot arm painting a car. An autonomous robot is similar to an automatic machine except that it operates in open and unstructured environments. The robot is still controlled by a program, but now receives information from its sensors that enable it to adjust the speed and direction of its motors (and actuators) as specified by the program.[18]

X. Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS)

Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems describe a weapons system that can – to a certain degree – decide on its own whether to deliver deadly force.

XI. Human-in-the-Loop Weapons

Robots that can select targets and deliver force only after a human command has been issues and the target has been confirmed by a human.[19]

XII. Human-on-the-Loop Weapons

Robots that can select targets and deliver force under the oversight of a human operator who can override the robots' actions. Generally, the robots are fully autonomous with the humans taking mostly an observatory role.[20]

XIII. Human-out-of-the-Loop Weapons

Robots that are capable of selecting targets and delivering force without any human input or interaction.[21]

---

[17]Secretary General, "Secretary-General Urges Security Council to Ensure Transparency, Accountability, Oversight, in First Debate on Artificial Intelligence."

[18]Docherty, *Losing Humanity*.

[19]Docherty.

[20]Docherty.

[21]Docherty.

XIV.   Fully Autonomous Weapons

The term "fully autonomous weapon" refers to both out-of-the-loop weapons and those that allow a human on the loop, but that are effectively out-of-the-loop weapons because the supervision is so limited. Fully autonomous weapons do not yet exist, but technology is moving in the direction of their development and precursors are already in use. Many countries employ weapons defense systems that are programmed to respond automatically to threats from incoming munitions. Militaries all around the world value these weapons because they require less manpower, reduce the risks to their own soldiers, and can reduce response time.[22]

XV.   Fire and Forget

The Fire and Forget Strategy in the military describes the locking-in of a target by a human operator who is then sending off the drone. From this point onwards, the drone handles all decisions automatically, as if the operator "forgot" it existed.[23]

XVI.   Strong Artificial Intelligence

Strong artificial intelligence, also known as Artificial General Intelligence (AGI), refers to a hypothetical AI system that possesses human-level intelligence and cognitive abilities across diverse domains. It would have the capacity for reasoning, learning, problem-solving, and exhibiting conscious experiences akin to the human mind.[24] Unlike narrow AI focused on specific tasks, strong AI aims to develop systems with general intelligence capable of understanding and navigating the world in a way similar to humans. The realization of strong AI is still an elusive goal, as current AI systems excel at narrow tasks but lack the flexibility, reasoning, and self-awareness that characterize human-level intelligence.[25]

XVII.   Automatic Weapons Defense Systems

Automatic Weapons Defense Systems are designed to sense an incoming munition, such as a missile or rocket, and to respond automatically to neutralize the threat. Human involvement, when it

---

[22]Docherty.

[23]David Adam, "Lethal AI Weapons Are Here: How Can We Control Them?," *Nature* 629, no. 8012 (April 23, 2024): 521–23, https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-024-01029-0.

[24]David Chalmers, "David Chalmers on Strong Artificial Intelligence," Dictionary of Arguments (Dictionary of Arguments), accessed June 3, 2024, https://philosophy-science-humanities-controversies.com/listview-details.php?a=%24a&author=Chalmers&concept=Strong+Artificial+Intelligence&first_name=David&id=888265.

[25]Hochschule Würzburg-Schweinfurt- Hochschule für angewandte Wissenschaften, "Weak vs. Strong AI – a Definition," University Würzburg-Schweinfurt - Default Homepage with Accesskey 0 (Technische Hochschule Würzburg-Schweinfurt), accessed June 3, 2024, https://ki.thws.de/en/about/strong-vs-weak-ai-a-definition/.

exists at all, is limited to accepting or overriding the computer's plan of action in a matter of seconds. These weapon defense systems have a significant degree of autonomy because they can sense and attack targets with minimal human input.[26] The most prominent example is probably Israel's Iron Dome which can automatically detect incoming missiles and launch defense missiles that hopefully destroy the incoming ones in midair, providing no harm to civilians.

XVIII. Automation Bias

The tendency to trust an automated system, despite evidence that the system is unreliable, or wrong in a particular case.[27]

XIX. Swarms

A swarm is made up of multiple aerials, ground or water-based vehicles. One operator controls all the vehicles at once. Swarms have been criticized, due to being called Human-on-the-loop weapons systems, but due to the controller not being able to control all vehicles at the same time, being Human-out-of-the-loop technology.

XX. The Proportionality Test

The proportionality test is a key principle in the laws of armed conflict that weighs the anticipated military advantage of an attack against the expected civilian harm. It involves evaluating technical data on the likelihood of an effective military strike and potential civilian casualties or damage. Some militaries are developing algorithms for robots or autonomous weapons that combine statistical data with real-time sensor information to assess the proportionality of a proposed strike in a utilitarian manner. The robot is authorized to fire only if the attack satisfies ethical constraints by minimizing collateral damage relative to the military necessity of the target. The test examines whether a reasonably well-informed person could have expected excessive civilian casualties from the attack based on the available information at the time.[28] [29]

XXI. Military Necessity

Military necessity refers to the principle that armed forces can take actions indispensable for securing the complete submission of the enemy as soon as possible, by any means not prohibited by the laws of armed conflict. There are concerns that the development and deployment of autonomous weapons systems could create a situation where their use becomes a military necessity, as they may

[26]Docherty, *Losing Humanity*.
[27]Docherty.
[28]United Nations, "Interim Report of the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions."
[29]Docherty, *Losing Humanity*.

prove substantially superior to other weapon types. This could lead to a scenario of armed conflicts dominated by machines rather than human soldiers and decision-makers, which some experts warn could have disastrous humanitarian consequences. The concept of military necessity potentially provides a rationale and driver for the proliferation of autonomous weapons, despite the ethical risks.[30]

XXII. "Jus ad bellum" and "jus in bello"

The conditions under which states are allowed to go to war or use armed force in general is defined by the term j*us ad bellum*. It prohibits the use of force among states, except for self-defense and UN authorized force. *Jus in bello* further on regulates how parties should behave if any conflict should arise, nonetheless. The term *jus in bello* seeks to minimize suffering by protecting and assisting all victims of armed conflict to the greatest extent possible and is mostly synonymous with the term *International Humanitarian Law*.[31]

XXIII. Major Countries and Organizations Involved

XXIV. International Committee of the Red Cross

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is an impartial, neutral, and independent humanitarian organization founded in 1863. Its mandate stems from the Geneva Conventions to protect victims of armed conflict worldwide. The ICRC provides assistance like food, medical aid and family reunification, promotes compliance with international humanitarian law, and operates as a neutral intermediary to gain access to those in need across over 90 countries affected by war and violence.[32]

The ICRC emphasizes the necessity for thorough legal reviews of any emerging weapon technologies to ensure their compliance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL). Specifically, they underscore the importance of adhering to the principles of distinction, proportionality, and military necessity, as well as the Martens Clause to act as a dynamic factor in evaluating the legality

---

[30]Docherty.

[31]International Committee of the Red Cross, "What Are Jus Ad Bellum and Jus in Bello?," September 18, 2015, https://www.icrc.org/en/document/what-are-jus-ad-bellum-and-jus-bello-0.

[32]International Committee of the Red Cross, "International Committee of the Red Cross," Page, International Committee of the Red Cross, October 3, 2013, https://www.icrc.org/en.

of new technologies, stressing that weapons must align with principles of humanity and public conscience, regardless of technological advancements.[33] [34]

XXV. Framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW)

The "Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects" as amended on 21 December 2001, usually referred to as the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons or CCW, is a key international humanitarian law instrument. It was adopted on 10 October 1980 and entered into force in 1983. When the convention wants to pass new regulations, it requires international consensus – and because many countries actively developing the technology oppose any ban – progress has been slow. As of 1st July 2023, 126 States have ratified or acceded to the CCW. There are 119 States parties to Protocol I, 106 to Amended Protocol II, 115 to Protocol III, 109 to Protocol IV and 97 to Protocol V. The Convention is structured into five protocols, which have been amended several times, each serving a different purpose:

- **Protocol I** prohibit the use of any weapon designed to injure by fragments which cannot be detected in the human body by X-rays.

- **Protocol II** deals with the prohibition and regulation of the use and transfer of non-detectable anti-personnel mines, boobytraps, and other devices.

- **Protocol III** prohibits the use of weapons primarily designed to set fire to objects or cause burn injuries against civilians.

- **Protocol IV** prohibits the use and transfer of laser weapons designed to cause permanent blindness – it was the protocol banning a technology before it could cause harm in military contexts; and

- **Protocol V** which requires all parties to a conflict to take measures to reduce dangers posed by explosive remnants of war.[35]

XXVI. United States of America

The United States of America is a federal republic and one of the world's leading military and economic powers. Regarding lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS), the U.S. policy does

---

[33]Docherty, *Losing Humanity*.
[34]Michael W Meier, "Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS): Conducting A Comprehensive Weapons Review," *HeinOnline* 30 (February 1, 2017): 119–32.
[35]United Nations, "The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons," accessed May 5, 2024, https://disarmament.unoda.org/the-convention-on-certain-conventional-weapons/.

not prohibit their development or employment, contrary to some reports. The U.S. Department of Defense Directive 3000.09, updated in January 2023, provides guidelines for different categories of autonomous weapon systems based on the level of human control. While the U.S. does not currently have LAWS in its inventory, some senior officials have stated that the country may be compelled to develop them if competitors like China do so. The U.S. has developed its timeline for deploying intelligent weapons systems through programs like "Replicator," aiming to deploy autonomous systems across multiple domains within 18–24 months.[36]

XXVII. Background Information

First off, the topic of LAWS has been added to the agenda of the UN General Assembly meeting this September.[37] Due to our time-freeze being in July, please keep in mind that we cannot use the information from this meeting directly, but you can inspire yourself on your country's opinions!

Unmanned and autonomous systems create both physical and emotional distance from the battlefield. This makes killing other people a lot easier on the commanding soldiers. Some drone operators have already compared drone strikes to video games because they feel emotionally detached from the act of killing.[38] Additionally, more and more robots are being destroyed or damaged in combat instead of Servicemen and women being killed or wounded, and this is the preferred outcome. Robots may be able to use lethal force more conservatively than humans because they do not have the need to self-preservation as a foremost drive, and their actions and responses may be faster, based on information processed from more sources at the same time, and more accurate, enabling them to reduce collateral damage and other mistakes made by humans.[39]

However, the human rights community continues to see advances in robotics as an exotic topic, as much of the information about these developments remains confined to military research, understanding the technologies requires expertise beyond that of most human rights experts, the attractions of greater use of robotic technologies greatly overshadow, in the public mind, the potential disadvantages, and the Global North has money, technology, know-how, but problems will mostly affect the South.[40] Despite these concerns, 61.5% of adults somewhat or strongly opposed

---

[36]U. S. Naval Institute Staff, "Defense Primer: U.S. Policy on Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems," *USNI News* (blog), May 16, 2023, https://news.usni.org/2023/05/16/defense-primer-u-s-policy-on-lethal-autonomous-weapon-systems-2.
[37]Adam, "Lethal AI Weapons Are Here."
[38]Docherty, *Losing Humanity*.
[39]United Nations, "Interim Report of the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions."
[40]Adam, "Lethal AI Weapons Are Here."

lethal autonomous weapons systems in war, in 2021 (see Figure 1)[41]. Nevertheless, the budget for drones has more than doubled in the past decade, indicating that the time to act is now(see Figure 2)![42]
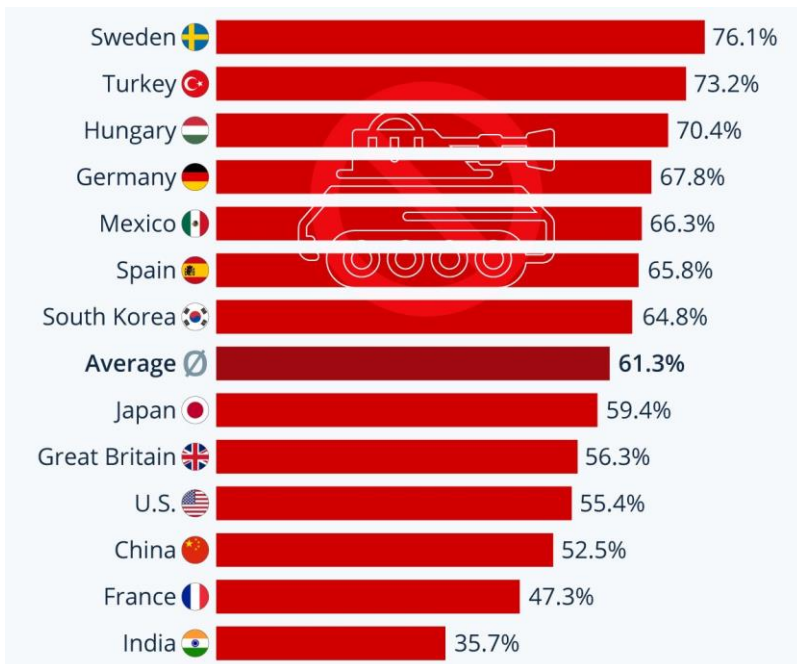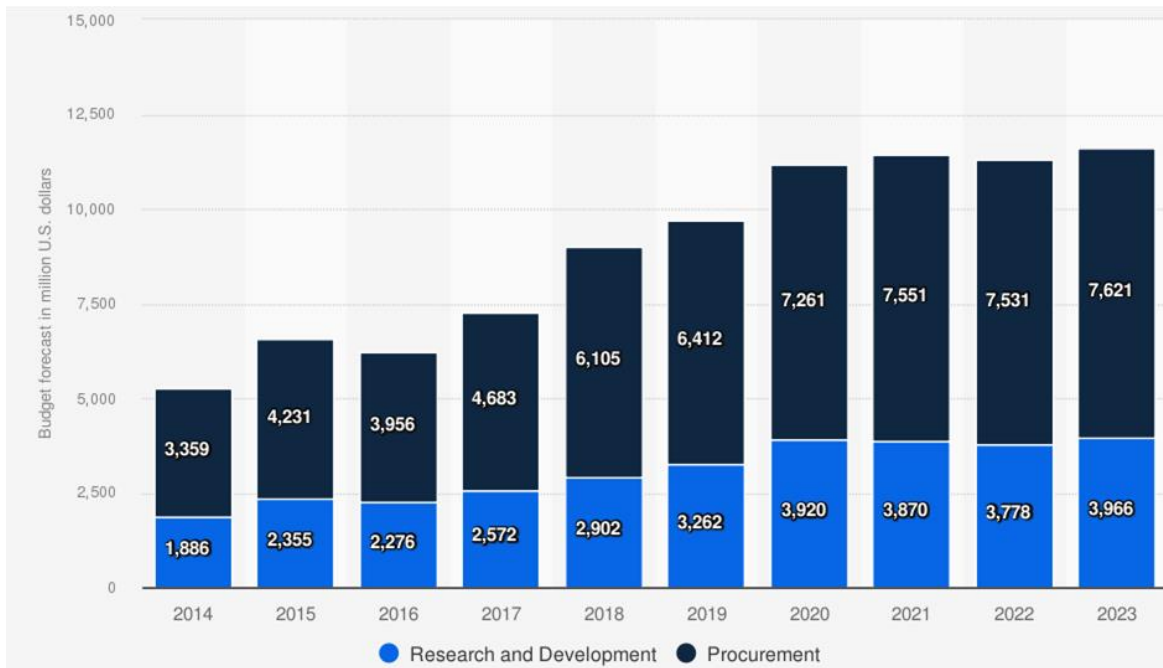

Figure 1: Share of adults who somewhat/strongly oppose lethal autonomous weapons systems in war, in 2021

[41] Anna Fleck, "Infographic: Should Killer Robots Be Banned?," Statista Daily Data, July 20, 2023, https://www-1statista-1com-1j2usyxu40028.buecherhallen.hh-han.com/chart/17022/autonomous-weapons-war.

[42] Teal Group, "Military Drones: Global Budget 2014-2023," Chart, Statista, August 2023, https://www.statista.com/statistics/428902/global-budget-forecast-for-unmanned-aerial-systems-or-drones/.

Figure 2: Estimated worldwide budget for unmanned aerial vehicles (drones) from 2014 to 2023 (in million U.S. dollars)

XXVIII. Fact Finding on Violation of Human Rights

In areas of crisis, fact finding has always been hard for human rights groups to do. Previously, they mostly relied on interviewing eyewitnesses from the scene, gathering in-person interviews. However, in those areas, interviewing people become increasingly inaccessible. Those findings are then often published in a long and written report that is not easily understandable by the public due to its complexities.[43] Since 2008 the "Ushahidi" platform has been developed by a group of tech bloggers in Kenya to address the violence and human rights violations following a disputed election. The platform aims to empower citizens by providing a means to report incidents, gather information, and raise awareness about human rights abuses and other crises. Ushahidi is used by a diverse range of users, including civil society organizations, media, activists, researchers, and governmental organizations. It has been deployed in various contexts, such as election monitoring, crisis response, activism, and community building. The platform has been used in over 160 countries, with more than 150,000 deployments and 6.5 million posts or "testimonies" since its inception. It focuses on crowdsourced data collection via SMS, email, web, and social media, as

---

[43]Docherty, *Losing Humanity*.

well as data management and visualization, allowing human rights groups to quickly engage and gather more data.[44]

XXIX. The Problem with Robot Armies

There are mainly three important issues to tackle when it comes to "Robot Armies". The first one being the issue of hacking. Any computer system has its bugs and can be hacked. When LAWS become the target of a hacking attack, for example by terrorist groups, they could be reprogrammed to target civilians especially. The question therefore remains what safeguards are being put in place for the LAWS to be protected against cyberattacks as best as possible.

Furthermore, swarms of LAWS, for example drone swarms, are multiple weapons controlled or supervised by a single operator. Research has found that human operators' performance levels are reduced by an average of 50 % when they control just two unmanned aircraft systems at a time. The possibility of lethal error therefore rises as humans start to play only a "supervisory" role over a larger number of machines.

Lastly, as discussed above, robotic armies make it easier to enter armed conflict, as the stakes of losing soldiers is decreased drastically. The potential for *jus ad bellum* violations therefore increases the more autonomous the weapons get. In particular for authoritarian regimes, this development is concerning as they might attack other nations or their own population more often.[45]

XXX. Artificial Intelligence

While militaries keep quiet about the performance of AI weapons on battlefields, some examples hint at their potential.[46] In simulations, an AI has outmaneuvered human pilots in dogfights and gotten the better of a remotely piloted drone.[47] However, there are still some risks. In 2007, for example, the UK had to hastily modify an autonomous missile, fearing it could mistake civilians for combatants in Afghanistan.[48] Many experts warn that integrating AI into warfare could be a revolutionary shift similar to the invention of gunpowder and nuclear weapons.[49] As one researcher puts it, "the technical capability for a system to find a human being and kill them is much easier than to develop a self-driving car."[50] Scenarios like AI-guided drones striking deep into enemy

[44]Ushahidi, "How the Ushahidi Platform Works, and What Comes Next," Ushahidi, November 5, 2018, https://www.ushahidi.com//about/blog/how-the-ushahidi-platform-works-and-what-comes-next/.
[45]United Nations, "Interim Report of the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions."
[46]Adam, "Lethal AI Weapons Are Here."
[47]Adam.
[48]Adam.
[49]Toby Walsh, "Killer Robots: The Future of War? | Essay by Toby Walsh | Britannica," September 18, 2023, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Killer-Robots-The-Future-of-War-2118625.
[50]Adam, "Lethal AI Weapons Are Here."

territory to cripple infrastructure, like a drone flying 1000km into Russian territory, illustrate the profound implications AI could have for the conduct of war.[51]

XXXI. Weapons Reviews

Currently, only a limited number of states – about 12 to 15 – are known to have a weapons review mechanism in place. However, these review systems are often not transparent to outsiders, with "national security reasons" being the most common reason for keeping the results confidential. Proper legal review should discuss the construction, design, control mechanisms, destructive characteristics, intended circumstances of use and intended military effect in quite some detail, with publishing of the findings afterward.[52]

XXXII. Historical Background and Previous Attempts to Solve This Issue

XXXIII. The 1899 and 1907 Hague Conventions

The 1899 and 1907 Hague Conventions were a series of international treaties focused on establishing laws and customs of war, as well as peaceful settlement of disputes.

The 1899 Hague Convention addressed issues like pacific settlement of disputes, laws of war on land, prohibition on using asphyxiating gases and expanding bullets.[53] Furthermore, it created the Permanent Court of Arbitration for peaceful settlement of international disputes.[54]

The 1907 Hague Convention continued the work from eight years prior and adopted conventions related to recovery of contract debts, rights of neutrals, submarine mines, enemy merchant ships, naval bombardment, and an international prize court.[55] Moreover, unanimously accepted the principle of compulsory arbitration and recommended holding another conference in 8 years, establishing the concept of successive conferences to handle international issues. However, the participating parties failed again to achieve limitation of armaments.

In General, The Hague Conventions laid the groundwork for future efforts at codifying laws of war and peaceful dispute resolution, influencing the creation of the League of Nations after World War I.[56]

---

[51]Adam.

[52]Meier, "Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS): Conducting A Comprehensive Weapons Review."

[53]DiploFoundation, "Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 | Digital Watch Observatory," September 2015, https://dig.watch/resource/hague-conventions-laws-war.

[54]The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Hague Convention | International Law, Humanitarianism & Peacekeeping | Britannica," August 28, 2014, https://www.britannica.com/event/Hague-Conventions.

[55]DiploFoundation, "Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 | Digital Watch Observatory."

[56]Britannica, "Hague Convention | International Law, Humanitarianism & Peacekeeping | Britannica."

XXXIV. The Martens Clause

The Martens Clause is a provision in international humanitarian law. It was introduced at the 1899 Hague Convention II and is included in various treaties that followed these conventions. This includes but is not limited to: The 1907 Hague Convention IV or the 1949 Geneva Conventions. The Martens Clause states that individuals are protected by principles of humanity and public conscience when treaties do not cover specific cases. Even though the Martens Clause is often referred to by the International Court of Justice in advisory opinions, legal effects and implications are not fully clarified by it. Furthermore, interpretations on the Martens Clause vary among scholars and state, as some see it as elevating humanity and public conscience to sources of international law, while others view it as preventing arguments allowing complete freedom in unregulated cases.[57]

XXXV. Geneva Conventions and its Additional Protocols

> In the study, development, acquisition or adoption of a new weapon, means or method of war, a High Contracting Party is under an obligation to determine whether its employment would, in some or all circumstances, be prohibited by this Protocol or by any other rule of international law applicable to the High Contracting Party.
>
> — *Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions*

The Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols are a set of international treaties that establish legal standards for humanitarian treatment during armed conflicts. The four Geneva Conventions of 1949 lay out protections for wounded and sick soldiers, shipwrecked sailors, prisoners of war, and civilians in times of war. The Additional Protocols of 1977 supplement the Conventions, with Protocol I covering international armed conflicts and Protocol II addressing non-international armed conflicts, expanding protections for victims of war and regulating means and methods of warfare.[58]

XXXVI. International Humanitarian Law

International Humanitarian Law (IHL) is a set of rules that seek to limit the effects of armed conflict for humanitarian reasons. It protects those not participating in hostilities, such as civilians, medical personnel, and prisoners of war, and restricts the means and methods of warfare. IHL originates

---

[57]Vaios Koutroulis, "Martens Clause," July 24, 2013, https://doi.org/10.1093/obo/9780199796953-0101.
[58]American Red Cross, "Summary of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Their Additional Protocols," April 2011, https://www.redcross.org/content/dam/redcross/atg/PDF_s/International_Services/International_Humanitarian_Law/IHL_SummaryGenevaConv.pdf.

from ancient civilizations and religions, with universal codification beginning in the 19th century through the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols. It applies only during armed conflicts, whether international between states or non-international within a state, and distinguishes between the two types, with different rules for each. IHL covers the protection of those not involved in fighting and restrictions on weapons and military tactics used in warfare.[59]

XXXVII. Timeline of Events

- **Medieval Ages**: Knights agreed not to target each other's horses with their lances

- **1495:** Leonardo da Vinci designs a "mechanical knight" capable of mimicking a range of human motions

- **1675:** France and the Holy Roman Empire agreed to not use poison bullets in their war[60]

- **1898:** Nikola Tesla unveils the first wireless remote-controlled vehicle, a small iron-hulled boat

- **1943:** FX-1400 drones are the first radio-controlled drones and used by Nazi-Germany to shoot at battleships

- **1950:** Alan Turing – the father of artificial intelligence – invents the Turing Test: "Can machines think?"

- **1953:** The USS Mississippi test-fires one of the earliest computer-guided missiles

- **During the Cold War:** The "Iron Wall" employs fully automatic shooting systems to shoot people who try to flee from the German Democratic Republic into the Federal Republic of Germany

- **1972:** U.S. Air Force uses laser-guided weapons to destroy Thanh Hoa Bridge in North Vietnam, marking first use of autonomous targeting

- **1980**: UN Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons is established

- **1988:** Aegis air-defense system aboard USS Vincennes shoots down Iranian commercial airliner, killing 290 people, in one of first cases of a human-supervised autonomous weapon system engaging target

---

[59]International Committee of the Red Cross, "What Is International Humanitarian Law?," July 2004, https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/assets/files/other/what_is_ihl.pdf.
[60]Walsh, "Killer Robots."

- **2002:** First U.S. drone strike outside a war zone kills militants in Yemen.
- **2012:** U.S. Department of Defense issues Directive 3000.09 placing 10-year moratorium on development of lethal autonomous weapon systems, allowing only non-lethal autonomous systems
- **2013:** Human Rights Watch and other NGOs launch the "Campaign to Stop Killer Robots"
- **2013:** UN Special Rapporteur raises alarm about LAWS in report to Human Rights Council
- **2018:** UN Secretary-General calls for prohibition of lethal autonomous weapons systems under international law
- **2023:** UN Group of Governmental Experts unable to agree on definition of LAWS. UN Special Rapporteur joins call for global prohibition on LAWS
- **2024:** Vienna Conference "Humanity at the Crossroads" discusses challenges of regulating LAWS
- **2024:** UN General Assembly adopts first resolution on LAWS, majority agree on urgent need to address challenges
- **2026:** UN Secretary-General's proposed deadline for regulation of fully autonomous weapons systems, including prohibition on lethal AWS, in New Agenda for Peace[61] [62]

XXXVIII. Possible Solutions

- Prohibit the development, production, and use of fully autonomous weapons through an international legally binding instrument.

- Adopt national laws and policies to prohibit the development, production, and use of fully autonomous weapons.

- Commence reviews of technologies and components that could lead to fully autonomous weapons. These reviews should take place at the very beginning of the development process and continue throughout the development and testing phases.

- Establish a professional code of conduct governing the research and development of autonomous robotic weapons, especially those capable of becoming fully autonomous, in order to ensure that legal and ethical concerns about their use in armed conflict are adequately considered at all stages of technological development.[63]

---

[61] Ty McCormick, "Lethal Autonomy: A Short History – Foreign Policy," January 24, 2014, https://foreignpolicy.com/2014/01/24/lethal-autonomy-a-short-history/.

[62] United Nations, "Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems (LAWS) – UNODA," accessed May 28, 2024, https://disarmament.unoda.org/the-convention-on-certain-conventional-weapons/background-on-laws-in-the-ccw/.

[63] Docherty, *Losing Humanity*.

- Create two expert groups: One would examine the more effective use of emerging information and communication technology for human rights monitoring and protection, and the other would examine proactive steps to be taken to ensure that robotic technologies are optimized in terms of their capacity to promote more effective compliance with international human rights and humanitarian law.[64]

XXXIX. How to prepare as a delegate

XL. General preparation

Please prepare the best you can for our general debates. To ensure comprehensive coverage of the forum's topics, each delegate is required to write **one position paper per topic**, as well as **at least three operative clauses per topic**. These documents are crucial for meaningful discussions and effective problem-solving. Please submit all operative clauses and position papers by the **deadline of 21/09/24**. Late submissions will not be eligible for correction or consideration in decision-making processes, as well as awards. If you need assistance with any of these, please read through the delegate's booklet or contact me via email (maxfehlinger@gym-meiendorf.de). In your position papers, Wikipedia *can* be a useful source, however, please use another source to cross-check what it tells you, like the UN website or other trustworthy sources, your government websites, or trustworthy newspapers (no, FOX NEWS and BILD are NOT trust-worthy! Only use them for inquiring about the opinion of certain political groups).

I would advise you to first get a general knowledge of your country. That includes reading the Wikipedia and CIA factbook pages for your country, NGO or IGO. After that, read up on the topic that is being discussed in general so that you know what you are talking about. This could also include watching a documentary or reading/skimming a book. In the end, do some research into what your country (and if time, what your allied/opposing nations) have already done in this context.

XLI. The Security Council

The United Nations Security Council was founded in 1945 and officially came into existence in 1946 under the UN Charter holding its first session on 17 January. The Security Council has now taken permanent residence at the UN headquarters in New York. It is also often considered the most important organ of the UN since its resolutions are binding for all members of the UN. Additionally,

---

[64]United Nations, "Interim Report of the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions."

the SC is the only committee that can enforce economic sanctions, arms embargoes, financial penalties and restrictions, travel bans, severance of diplomatic relations, blockades and even collective military action.

The Security Council has four main purposes which are:

- to maintain international peace and security;

- to develop friendly relations among nations;

- to cooperate in solving international problems and in promoting respect for human rights;

- and to be a center for harmonizing the actions of nations.

Current members of the Security Council include the five permanent member states (P5), which are granted a right to veto a resolution or amendment:[65] The People's Republic of China, the French Republic, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. Furthermore, Algeria, Ecuador, Guyana, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, and Switzerland have been elected to the Security Council in 2023 and 2024 and hold non-permanent seats.66 The non-permanent members of the Security Council are elected by the General Assembly for a two-year term. Each year the GA elects five non-permanent members and countries can't be reelected immediately. All delegates should be aware that it is a great honor to be a part of the Security Council and that it also brings a lot of responsibility.

It is also important to know that the procedure in the Security Council differs from the one in the other committees: There is no lobbying process, as the resolutions are ad-hoc resolutions, which consist only of Operative Clauses made through amendments. After the amendments have been debated on separately, there is time in favor and against the whole resolution. To prevent a P5 nation to vote against a resolution, one of the permanent members can make a motion to hold a P5 caucus. If that motion is seconded by the other four P5 nations and granted by the President of the Security Council, the President stops the debate and holds a short meeting with the P5 nations where they can discuss their voting behavior in order to find a compromise. With their veto power, the P5 nations can choose whether they make use of their power (vote with/without privilege). Please note that in the Security Council, 9 votes in favor are needed to pass an amendment or a resolution.

---

[65]The veto right might be restrained on amendments at MUNoH, if it is used too often or no amendment passes.
[66]United Nations, "Current Members," accessed May 5, 2024, https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/current-members.

XLII. Relevant Treaties and UN material

- Meeting of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW) on 16 December 2013: https://undocs.org/en/CCW/MSP/2013/10

- Report of the 2014 informal Meeting of Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS): https://undocs.org/en/CCW/MSP/2014/3

- Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 12 October 2023: "Lethal autonomous weapons systems": https://undocs.org/A/C.1/78/L.56

- Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 7 October 2022: "Human rights implications of new and emerging technologies in the military domain": https://undocs.org/A/HRC/RES/51/22

XLIII. Useful links

If you have, check the resources your public library provides. They often give you a lot of paid services for free, including some of the following. Otherwise, some of the following sides will offer some/all free content.

- Kanopy (https://kanopy.com/): A website that offers a lot of documentaries for free/with a library or school access

- Google Scholar (https://scholar.google.com/): Google's Search Engine, but focused on academic articles

- JSTOR (https://jstor.org/): A website on which many academic articles about topics are published (might require school/library access)

- CIA Factbook (https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/): Access general information about your country. I strongly advise you to read up here on your country.

- Know how to efficiently use Google: Example article with 20 useful tips: https://www.lifehack.org/articles/technology/20-tips-use-google-search-efficiently.html

- The official UN website (https://un.org/): I sometimes find, the search on this website does not work as well as I wish. You could use Google and add "site:un.org" to your query, to use Google to search the UN website (see the other tips in the article above).

- The Internet Archive (https://web.archive.org/ and https://archive.is/): When you want to read an article from a newspaper (such as the New York Times), but it is paywalled.

- Perplexity AI (https://perplexity.ai/) is also a helpful tool to find great (re)sources. You can use it to get a more general overview about topics or your country but should not solely rely on it!

- Statements by individual states on the topic of lethal autonomous weapons systems: https://www.bmeia.gv.at/en/european-foreign-policy/disarmament/conventional-arms/autonomous-weapons-systems/2024-vienna-conference-on-autonomous-weapons-systems/statements as well as https://meetings.unoda.org/meeting/29747/statements

- The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons: More information about how they work and their five protocols: https://disarmament.unoda.org/the-convention-on-certain-conventional-weapons

XLIV. Bibliography

Adam, David. "Lethal AI Weapons Are Here: How Can We Control Them?" *Nature* 629, no. 8012 (April 23, 2024): 521–23. https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-024-01029-0.

Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Hague Convention | International Law, Humanitarianism & Peacekeeping | Britannica," August 28, 2014. https://www.britannica.com/event/Hague-Conventions.

Chalmers, David. "David Chalmers on Strong Artificial Intelligence." Dictionary of Arguments. Dictionary of Arguments. Accessed June 3, 2024. https://philosophy-science-humanities-controversies.com/listview-details.php?a=%24a&author=Chalmers&concept=Strong+Artificial+Intelligence&first_name=David&id=888265.

DiploFoundation. "Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 | Digital Watch Observatory," September 2015. https://dig.watch/resource/hague-conventions-laws-war.

Docherty, Bonnie. *Losing Humanity: The Case against Killer Robots*. Amsterdam Berlin: Human Rights Watch, 2012.

Fleck, Anna. "Infographic: Should Killer Robots Be Banned?" Statista Daily Data, July 20, 2023. https://www-1statista-1com-1j2usyxu40028.buecherhallen.hh-han.com/chart/17022/autonomous-weapons-war.

International Committee of the Red Cross. "International Committee of the Red Cross." Page. International Committee of the Red Cross, October 3, 2013. https://www.icrc.org/en.

———. "What Are Jus Ad Bellum and Jus in Bello?," September 18, 2015. https://www.icrc.org/en/document/what-are-jus-ad-bellum-and-jus-bello-0.

———. "What Is International Humanitarian Law?," July 2004.
    https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/assets/files/other/what_is_ihl.pdf.

Koutroulis, Vaios. "Martens Clause," July 24, 2013. https://doi.org/10.1093/obo/9780199796953-
    0101.

McCormick, Ty. "Lethal Autonomy: A Short History – Foreign Policy," January 24, 2014.
    https://foreignpolicy.com/2014/01/24/lethal-autonomy-a-short-history/.

Meier, Michael W. "Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS): Conducting A Comprehensive
    Weapons Review." *HeinOnline* 30 (February 1, 2017): 119–32.

Red Cross, American. "Summary of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Their Additional
    Protocols," April 2011.
    https://www.redcross.org/content/dam/redcross/atg/PDF_s/International_Services/Internatio
    nal_Humanitarian_Law/IHL_SummaryGenevaConv.pdf.

Secretary General. "Secretary-General Urges Security Council to Ensure Transparency,
    Accountability, Oversight, in First Debate on Artificial Intelligence." *United Nations*, July
    18, 2023. https://press.un.org/en/2023/sgsm21880.doc.htm.

Staff, U. S. Naval Institute. "Defense Primer: U.S. Policy on Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems."
    USNI News (blog), May 16, 2023. https://news.usni.org/2023/05/16/defense-primer-u-s-
    policy-on-lethal-autonomous-weapon-systems-2.

Teal Group. "Military Drones: Global Budget 2014-2023." Chart. Statista, August 2023.
    https://www.statista.com/statistics/428902/global-budget-forecast-for-unmanned-aerial-
    systems-or-drones/.

United Nations. "Current Members." Accessed May 5, 2024.
    https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/current-members.

———. "Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems (LAWS) – UNODA." Accessed May 28, 2024.
    https://disarmament.unoda.org/the-convention-on-certain-conventional-
    weapons/background-on-laws-in-the-ccw/.

———. "Role of the Security Council." United Nations Peacekeeping. Accessed May 5, 2024.
    https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/role-of-security-council.

———. "The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons." Accessed May 5, 2024.
    https://disarmament.unoda.org/the-convention-on-certain-conventional-weapons/.

———. "What Is the Security Council?" Accessed May 5, 2024.
    https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/what-security-council.

United Nations, General Assembly. "Interim Report of the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial,
    Summary or Arbitrary Executions," August 23, 2010. https://undocs.org/A/65/321.

Ushahidi. "How the Ushahidi Platform Works, and What Comes Next." Ushahidi, November 5,
    2018. https://www.ushahidi.com//about/blog/how-the-ushahidi-platform-works-and-what-
    comes-next/.

Walsh, Toby. "Killer Robots: The Future of War? | Essay by Toby Walsh | Britannica," September
    18, 2023. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Killer-Robots-The-Future-of-War-2118625.

Wissenschaften, Hochschule Würzburg-Schweinfurt- Hochschule für angewandte. "Weak vs.
    Strong AI – a Definition." University Würzburg-Schweinfurt - Default Homepage with
    Accesskey 0. Technische Hochschule Würzburg-Schweinfurt. Accessed June 3, 2024.
    https://ki.thws.de/en/about/strong-vs-weak-ai-a-definition/.