General Assembly 6-Chair Report

Topic 2: Establishing international legal frameworks for accountability in the use of autonomous weapon systems & lethal AI systems in armed conflict.

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Personal Statements

Olivia Szydlik

Hi! My name is Olivia and I will be your head chair at this year's MUNISS conference! I am 16 years old, and I am in 10th grade at the Frankfurt International School! I have been passionate about MUN ever since my first MUNISS conference in HSC representing France and since then I have been a distinguished delegate at Royal Russel, a P5 HSC member at THIMUN, an ICJ advocate, etc. This will be my first time as a head chair and I am so excited to get to know and help everyone, and help foster meaningful debate! MUNISS is one of my favorite conferences and this will be the 19th MUNISS held. The theme this year is “Global Collaboration towards Greater Freedom”, and I hope we can embody this in our debate! GA 6 is the 6th General Assembly committee dedicated to discussing legal topics, primarily international law. Here we will discuss legal questions and justice and form resolutions to properly tackle violations and problems that arouse international law. This is a great experience if you are interested in law and widening your view on criminal justice. For those of you whom it may be your first MUN conference, we will be with you every step of the way. We recommend taking chances; making a speech at least once each day. Good luck delegates! And we wish for a rich debate!

Jinisha Jain

Hi my name is Jinisha Jain and I am a student at Frankfurt International School and it is an honor for me to be your Deputy Chair at this year's conference. My school offers a wide range of opportunities and I am

always motivated to step outside my comfort zone and try something new. I have attended MUNISS twice in the past, gaining valuable experience in debate, diplomacy and collaboration. This year will mark my third MUNISS conference and my first time as chair, which I am extremely excited about. I look forward to guide productive debate and help delegates grow. I am mainly focused on serving as a stepping stone for all delegates and creating a meaningful and memorable experience for all.

Introduction

The ever-changing world of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and autonomous technologies has brought a completely new perspective as to how modern warfare is being carried out in today's world. One of the many growing concerns as technology advances is the use of autonomous weapons systems (AWS) and lethal AI systems. These systems can select and engage targets with next to no direct human control. Even though these systems may offer many military advantages, they have started to raise many serious legal and ethical concerns, especially when it comes down to the responsibility of the harm that would be caused during armed conflict.

The current International Humanitarian Law (IHL) keeps human decision making skills in mind and due to this, the current legal rules discussing autonomous systems are not very clear as to who should be held responsible when autonomous weapons are to make mistakes or violate any laws of war. Because of the lack of clarity in the IHL, it opens up many risks for civilians and weakens the accountability under international law.

In GA6, as the legal committee we play a central role in addressing these challenges. As the primary forum for legal questions, we are responsible for finding solutions to loopholes in international law and discussing how international law can evolve to regulate new technologies.

Glossary

IHL: As mentioned by the international committee of the red cross, it is a " set of rules that seeks, for humanitarian reasons, to limit the effects of armed conflict. It protects persons who are not, or are no longer, directly or actively participating in hostilities, and imposes limits on the means and methods of warfare" (What Is International).

UNDP: "As the United Nations' lead agency on international development, UNDP works in 170 countries and territories to help people build better lives while protecting the planet" (United Nations Development Programme).

EU: The European Union (EU) is an international organization of 27 European countries with shared economic, social, and security policies (European Union).

NATO: The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is a military alliance which was established in 1949 in order to create a counterweight to Soviet armies stationed in central and eastern Europe after World War II (North Atlantic).

Autonomous Weapon System (AWS): A weapon that can select and attack a target without a human directly controlling each step.

Loitering Munition: A drone that flies around an area until it identifies a target and then destroys itself on impact.

FPV Drone: A small drone piloted using a live video feed view ("First Person View") often used to drop explosives or crash into vehicles.

UNCCW: UN-established convention on "Certain Conventional Weapons", aimed at regulating the use of weapons such as drones.

Issue Explanation

The use of autonomous and lethal AI weapons systems clashes severely with the existing legal frameworks such as the IHL. One of the core issues is to be able to identify who would be held responsible when a system that is run by AI or no human support were to violate international law. Traditionally, the people accountable would be the decision maker at that point in time. However autonomous systems are now operating based on algorithms and data inputs that are not always as easily predictable or transparent as presumed.

If we look at this from a humanitarian point of view, these weapons not only raise a concern about accountability, but also about civilian protection. The IHL has set many limits on how force could be used in war which have been placed in the interest of civilian protection and to prevent unnecessary harm. Even after all of these rules and regulations, many experts have started to show deep concerns that most if not all fully autonomous systems will likely struggle or make mistakes in differentiating between combat and civilians, especially in urban environments. The failure to address the issue would lead to a devastating increase in the number of civilian casualties and violations of international law.

Keeping all of the legal concerns in mind, the use of autonomous weapons systems will have very serious humanitarian, social and political impacts as mentioned by many experts and analyzers. The populated areas that are close to the conflict zones are most at risk, especially in areas where the fighting is happening near schools and hospitals since this could harm those who are absolutely vulnerable. If we as an international community do not address this threat, the use of autonomous weapons may become uncontrollable. Over time, this will potentially weaken the respect for international rules created by the global community that govern warfare and could lead conflict to become more unpredictable.

Perspectives of Parties Involved

Many different member states have taken different stances on how autonomous weapons should be regulated under international law.

United States:
According to the United States, the current version of the IHL is sufficient to regulate autonomous weapon systems. They further emphasize that human judgement can be present in the algorithms through operational oversight and manual ways to override the data input. Additionally the U.S also highlights the military advantages of AI, since they believe that it would increase the precision and also reduce the risk to soldiers (United States).

Russia:
Russia has a similar view to the U.S, as they have publicly opposed creating new legally binding international rules on autonomous weapons. Russia believes that the current IHL already applies to autonomous weapons and provides the necessary clarifications. Furthermore, Russia is warning the international community that by creating stricter regulations, they would be limiting military innovation and national defense capabilities(Russia).

Mexico:
As for Mexico, they are advocating for stricter international regulations of autonomous weapons systems and are showing full support in multilateral agreements in order to ensure that the person(people) concerned is/are held accountable. Mexico emphasizes that humanitarian risks are increasing by these weapons coming into use, particularly in conflict-afflicted regions (Mexico).

International Organizations and Civil Society:
The secretary general of the United nations and the international committee of the red cross(ICRC) have urged all member states to lay out clear limits and constraints on the use of autonomous weapons in order to ensure that there is meaningful human control which can provide a safer

way to ensure minimum mistakes in programs and algorithms(What Is International).

History of the Topic

The rising issue of autonomous weapons systems are the result of the long-term developments in military technology and international law. After World War II had ended, the IHL was created through treaties that were signed by many member states such as the very well known Geneva Conventions. This was done in order to regulate the armed conflict and be able to ensure that those accountable are brought to justice. The legal frameworks in such treaties were always made under the assumption that some kind of human body were to be responsible for decisions related to the use of force, which allowed the states and military commanders to be held accountable for unlawful actions.

During the cold war, some states had started to evaluate early forms of automated military technology. Some examples of this were radar-guided missiles and automated air defences which were mainly developed in order to have a quicker response system to threats. However, the systems were at their initial stages and did not use any type of advanced technologies that we know of today. It required human authorization to use lethal force meaning that it was still run mainly by human bodies. As a result, the international law did not face any major challenges and the responsibility could still be given to the human actors.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the increased use of unmanned systems such as but not limited to remote-controlled boats, drifting buoys, and drones marked an important shift. Remotely piloted drones were introduced by states such as the United States for surveillance and targeted strikes. Even though this started to raise concerns, humans continued to control their operation, and accountability remained within existing legal structures. At this stage, most countries believed that the IHL was capable of regulating emerging technologies.

A major breakthrough was introduced in 2013, when the issue of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS) was formally introduced at the conventions on certain conventional weapons (CCW). This was a mark to show the beginning of international recognition that weapons that were capable of operating without meaningful human control could pose serious legal and humanitarian risks. Following this, between 2014 and 2019, the CCW established a Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) to study autonomous weapons and their implications.

During these discussions, states began to take clearly different positions. Militarily advanced countries, including the United States and Russia, argued that existing international humanitarian law already applied and that new treaties were unnecessary. In contrast, countries such as Austria and Mexico, along with many developing states, called for new binding legal frameworks or bans, emphasizing risks to civilians and accountability gaps.

In recent years, the issue has continued to grow more serious. Artificial intelligence is now increasingly used in targeting assistance, surveillance, and decision-support systems, further blurring the line between human and machine decision making. Despite ongoing discussions, no binding international agreement has been adopted. Overall, while awareness of the problem has increased, the lack of legal progress has allowed the risks associated with autonomous weapon systems to worsen over time highlighting the urgent need for international action.

Potential Solutions for the issue:

Many International efforts that have been made to address autonomous weapon systems have been made mainly under the CCW. Since 2013, many member states have discussed the issue through meetings and a GGE. Such discussions have helped understanding the key issues but have rarely resulted in any action being taken or any binding international rules being created. A few previously implemented goals include but are not limited to:

1. a global urge for the creation of an international treaty regarding the use of autonomous weapons (State support).
2. Over 100 countries support a legally-binding instrument on autonomous weapons systems (State support).

Some states have tried to support the creation of a new legally binding international law which is created specifically to tailor to the needs of all member states in order to provide accountability to those needed. This approach would clearly define autonomous weapon systems, set limits on their uses, and establish accountability mechanisms. Some proposals included banning fully autonomous lethal weapons altogether such as but not limited to:

1. As stated by the Human Rights Watch, “More than 120 countries support calls to negotiate a treaty that prohibits and regulates autonomous weapons systems.”
2. According to Automated Decision Research, “a research group that tracks state support for laws on autonomous weapons systems.”

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