NIMUN' 26

DISEC

Disarmament & International Security Committee

STUDYGUIDE



DISEC

Topic: Regulating use of artificial intelligence in weapon systems

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1. Committee Mandate

1.1 History and Establishment

The Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC), also known as the First Committee of the UN General Assembly, was established in 1945 with the creation of the United Nations. Its purpose was to provide all member states with a universal forum to address threats to international peace following the devastation of World War II. Since then, DISEC has remained central to global discussions on arms regulation, military restraint, and emerging security concerns [1].

1.2 Legal Mandates and Authority

DISEC operates under the UN Charter's provisions for the General Assembly. While its resolutions are **not legally binding**, they carry significant political influence. The committee is mandated to:

a. Examine international security challenges.
b. Recommend measures to reduce global armaments.
c. Promote adherence to international humanitarian law.
d. Support broader disarmament frameworks such as UNODA and CCW;
e. Encourage cooperative approaches to emerging military technologies.

Though DISEC cannot enforce disarmament, its debates and recommendations often guide later negotiations in specialized bodies [1].

1.2.1 Core Responsibilities and Functions

DISEC's core functions include reviewing global military developments, encouraging transparency among states, and supporting international norms on responsible weapon use. It provides the primary diplomatic space for:

1. Debating the impact of new weapon systems;
1. Addressing risks to international stability;
1. Building consensus on ethical and legal expectations;
. Coordinating with regional organizations and expert bodies.

With all 193 member states participating, DISEC remains the most inclusive and representative platform for shaping security-related standards [1].

1.3 DISEC's Role in Regulating Emerging Technologies

As military innovation accelerates, DISEC has become increasingly important in evaluating the risks of emerging technologies, including cyber capabilities, space systems, and artificial intelligence. For AI-enabled weapon systems, DISEC plays a foundational role by:

a. Clarifying terminology and concepts.
b. Identifying humanitarian and security risks.
c. Facilitating early political dialogue before specialized negotiations occur.
d. Recommending pathways for regulation at bodies such as the CCW.

DISEC does not draft treaties on AI weapons directly, but it sets the political groundwork for future regulatory efforts [1].

Though DISEC faces structural limitations: its outputs are advisory, states often disagree on national security priorities, and rapidly developing technologies frequently advance faster than multilateral diplomacy. Differing threat perceptions and strategic interests make consensus difficult, especially on issues like autonomy in weapons. Despite these challenges, DISEC remains essential for establishing shared expectations and initiating global action before technological risks escalate [1].

2. Glossary and Key Terms

1. **Amnesty International:** NGO advocating for human rights; highlights risks to life, dignity, and protection under international law from autonomous weapons [2].
2. **Article 36 Weapons Review**: Requirement under Additional Protocol I for states to review new weapons to ensure compliance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL) [3].
3. **CCW (Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons):** UN treaty framework regulating or banning weapons deemed excessively injurious, including lethal autonomous weapons [4].
4. **Command Responsibility:** Doctrine holding military commanders accountable for violations committed by forces under their authority, including in AI-enabled operations.
5. **Contextual Autonomy Variables:** Operational or environmental factors affecting the behavior and decision-making autonomy of AI weapon systems.
6. **Geneva Conventions & Additional Protocols:** International treaties providing the legal framework for armed conflict; principles include distinction, proportionality, and precautions [5].
7. **GGE on LAWS (Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems):** Expert group under CCW that examines legal, ethical, and military implications of autonomous weapons and develops guiding principles [6].
8. **HITL (Human-in-the-Loop):** Autonomous system that requires human approval for engagement decisions [7].

9. **HOTL (Human-on-the-Loop):** Autonomous system where humans supervise operations but do not approve every engagement [7].
10. **HOOTL (Human-out-of-the-Loop):** Autonomous system capable of independently selecting and engaging targets without human intervention [7].
11. **ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross):** Guardian of IHL; provides ethical and humanitarian guidance on autonomous weapons.
12. **International Humanitarian Law (IHL):** Legal framework governing conduct in armed conflict, requiring distinction, proportionality, and precautions to protect civilians.
13. **Loitering Munitions:** Autonomous or semi-autonomous weapons that hover in a target area before selecting and engaging.
14. **Neural Networks:** AI technologies enabling pattern recognition and autonomous decision-making in weapons systems.
15. **Non-State Actors:** Groups outside recognized governments (e.g., rebels, terrorist organizations) potentially acquiring AI-enabled weapons.
16. **Proliferation Concerns:** Risk that AI-enabled weapons or technologies will spread to states or non-state actors lacking robust regulation.
17. **Strategic Stability:** Balance of power and deterrence in international security; can be affected by autonomous weapons' speed and unpredictability.
18. **UNODA (United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs):** UN office supporting disarmament processes and emerging technologies, including AI weapon discussions [8].
19. **Black Box Problem:** Autonomous systems behaving in ways that human operators cannot fully understand or predict.
20. **Voluntary National Policies:** State-level directives regulating AI-enabled weapons, such as emphasizing human oversight or banning fully autonomous systems.
21. **Biological Weapon Convention (BWC):** International treaty that bans the development, production, stocking and the use of chemical and stockpiling of biological and toxin weapons [9].
22. **Chemical Weapon Convention (CWC):** International treaty that bans the development, production, stocking and the use of chemical weapons [10].
23. **Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT):** International treaty that bans the proliferation, production, stocking and the use of nuclear arms.
24. **Geneva Convention:** International treaties that offer the legal framework of armed conflict; the principles include distinction, proportionality, and precautions [5].

3.Introduction to the Agenda

3.1 AI-Enabled Weapon Systems

AI-enabled weapon systems often referred to as autonomous weapon systems (AWS) or lethal autonomous weapon systems (LAWS), are weapons that incorporate autonomous or semi-autonomous functions, enabling them to search for, identify, track, and/or engage targets with limited or no human intervention. These systems may use sensor suites, machine learning algorithms, and onboard processing to perform tasks such as target detection, classification, and engagement.

In some cases, autonomy is limited, for example, automated defensive systems or "fire-and-forget" weapons , while in others the system may independently select and attack targets. It is important to note that there is no universally accepted legal definition of LAWS/AWS. International fora such as the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW)'s Group of Governmental Experts have discussed functional characterizations rather than fixed technical definitions [11][12][13][14].

3.2 Urgency and Relevance

Recent advances in artificial intelligence, robotics, sensor technology, and computing power have increased both the feasibility and the appeal of AI-enabled weapon systems. These advances have accelerated the transition from assisted weapons toward systems that can operate with varying levels of autonomy. Several states are actively investing in or deploying weapons with autonomous features. As such, the risk that these systems may be used in conflict, with serious humanitarian, legal, and ethical implications, is no longer theoretical. Moreover, in the absence of a binding international regulatory framework specifically tailored to AI-enabled weapons, the proliferation of these technologies threatens to outpace international norms. This regulatory gap increases the risk of misuse, accidental escalation, unaccountable lethal force, and destabilization, raising urgent questions for the international security and humanitarian communities. Given these converging factors, rapid technological change, growing deployment interest, and legal and ethical uncertainty, the regulation of AI-enabled weapons has become not only relevant but urgent. [15][16][17][18].

3. 3 Emergence of AI in Military Weapons and Applications

Historically, automated or semi-automated weapon systems existed (e.g., anti-personnel mines, radar-based defensive systems) often with limited or pre-programmed autonomy. With the advent of modern AI, machine learning, and enhanced sensor/processing capabilities, autonomy in weapons has evolved significantly. Contemporary AI-enabled systems are potentially capable of dynamic decision-making: interpreting sensor input, classifying targets, and initiating engagement without constant human oversight.These systems are not limited to a single domain: AI-enabled weapon technologies are applicable across air, land, sea, and unmanned platforms , from drones and missiles to autonomous ground vehicles and naval systems Thus the "emergence" we refer to is not incremental, it represents a qualitative shift in how weapons operate, decision-making loops in warfare, and the potential for speed, scale, and autonomy in conflict [19][20][21][22].

4. Background of the Agenda

The evolution of autonomous weapon systems (AWS) is a multi-decade progression from simple machine-assisted targeting to sophisticated, independent operation, driven by advances in AI, sensors, and computing. Early developments in the 1960s-1980s involved computerized and remote guidance (like early drones and guided missiles) that only offered basic machine assistance. This was followed in the 1990s by the Rise of Precision-Guided Munitions, which used advanced sensors and navigation to adjust their paths autonomously, though human control over engagement decisions remained central [20][23][24].

The pace accelerated in the 2000s with the Integration of Robotics and AI Subsystems, introducing more refined sensors and early object recognition in unmanned vehicles, raising initial concerns about accountability. By the 2010s, Semi-Autonomous Systems (such as loitering munitions) emerged, capable of independently tracking and engaging targets based on pre-defined criteria, thereby demonstrating the operational feasibility of automated lethal decision-making. Since 2015, major advancements in machine learning and neural networks have pushed the trajectory toward Fully Autonomous Possibilities (often categorized as "human-on-the-loop" or "human-out-of-the-loop"), enabling weapons to operate independently in complex environments and making the need for clear international regulation increasingly urgent [25][26].

4.1 Dual-Use Dilemma

Artificial intelligence presents a dual-use dilemma because its advancements, designed for civilian benefit, possess an inherent potential for military transformation. This rapid, cross-industry expansion of AI creates a technological ecosystem where breakthroughs intended for peaceful applications seamlessly transition into military usage. For instance, civilian innovations like self-driving algorithms, facial recognition, and large-scale data analytics, developed to improve convenience and safety, have core functions (such as object tracking and decision-making automation) that are directly transferable to lethal targeting processes and battlefield assessment. [27][28].

This dilemma is compounded by commercial robotics and the global accessibility of dual-use components. The robotics industry provides affordable sensors, drones, and autonomous navigation systems that militaries routinely repurpose for surveillance, mapping, and weapon delivery. Furthermore, the accessibility of commercial drones, open-source software, and cloud-based AI lowers the barrier for smaller states to acquire or modify autonomous capabilities, significantly increasing proliferation risks and complicating international regulatory efforts. Finally, the innovation cycle is often driven by private companies and their commercial incentives, which means technological development typically outpaces military regulatory frameworks, further accelerating the development of autonomous military tools through commercial-military partnerships [29][30].

4.2 Key Milestones in International Weapon Regulation

International weapon regulation has evolved through treaties, customary norms, legal reviews, and multilateral diplomatic initiatives. These milestones form the foundation upon which today's debates on autonomous weapons are constructed.

4.2.1 Geneva Conventions and International Humanitarian Law (IHL)

The Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols form the universal legal framework governing conduct in armed conflict. Although drafted before modern AI technologies existed, their core principles (distinction, proportionality, and prohibition of unnecessary suffering) apply to all new weapons, including autonomous systems. AI-enabled weapons must, in theory, be capable of reliably identifying lawful targets, assessing civilian harm, and complying with human-centered battlefield rules. Because current AI technologies struggle with contextual judgment, ambiguous environments, and unpredictable variables, IHL remains the starting point for evaluating the legitimacy and limits of autonomy in warfare. These conventions therefore still provide the legal and ethical foundation for all ongoing debates about autonomous weapons [31][32].

4.2.2 Article 36 Weapons Reviews

Article 36 of Additional Protocol I requires states to conduct a legal review of any new weapon, means, or method of warfare before adoption or deployment. This process ensures compliance with IHL and other binding treaties. For AI-enabled weapons, Article 36 has become increasingly significant: states must assess autonomy, predictability, reliability, and the degree of required human control. This includes evaluating algorithmic behavior, risks of malfunction, vulnerability to hacking, and whether the system can be operated lawfully in complex environments. Many technologically advanced states,including the US, UK, Netherlands, and Australia, have specifically updated or formalized their Article 36 procedures because of emerging autonomous systems. As a result, Article 36 remains one of the only concrete legal mechanisms currently regulating AI weapons at the national level [33][34].

4.2.3 CCW Discussions on Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems (2014–2017)

The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) became the first international forum to formally examine autonomous weapons when it launched discussions on LAWS in 2014. These sessions brought diplomats, AI experts, military strategists, and humanitarian actors into a shared space to assess ethical,

legal, and security implications. Early discussions focused on definitions and identifying potential risks, while later sessions examined accountability gaps and human control requirements. Although the CCW has not reached consensus on a treaty, it continues to serve as the primary multilateral platform for negotiating norms around autonomy in warfare [35][36].

4.2.4 NGO and Civil Society Engagement

Civil society has played a major role in shaping the global response to autonomous weapons. Organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Campaigns to Stop Killer Robots advocate for limits on autonomy and highlight humanitarian concerns, including algorithmic bias, accountability gaps, and unpredictable machine behavior in conflict. Their reports and policy recommendations significantly influence both public opinion and diplomatic debates, especially within the CCW and DISEC. This sustained pressure has contributed to growing support for responsible AI use, stronger oversight mechanisms, and in some states, voluntary moratoria on fully autonomous weapons [37][38].

4.2.5 CCW Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on LAWS (2017–Present)

The establishment of the GGE transformed LAWS discussions into a structured diplomatic process. The GGE examines definitions, risks, compliance with IHL, and potential regulatory approaches. It has produced widely endorsed guiding principles such as the need for human responsibility, predictability of systems, accountability for harm, and restrictions on fully autonomous targeting. While consensus on a binding treaty has not yet been achieved, the GGE remains the key international body shaping norms and expectations around autonomy, and its work heavily influences national policy-making and UN debates [36][39].

4.2.6 UN General Assembly (UNGA) First Committee / DISEC Debates and Resolutions

The UNGA's First Committee has adopted resolutions requesting studies, promoting responsible AI development, and emphasizing meaningful human control in weapon systems. As the world's primary disarmament forum, DISEC's involvement legitimizes AWS as a core global security issue [40][41].

4.2.7 State-Led Initiatives and Voluntary Policies

Several states have taken individual steps toward regulating autonomy. Some countries, including Austria, New Zealand, and Costa Rica, advocate for a full ban on fully autonomous weapons, while others such as the US, UK, and France have

published national directives emphasizing human oversight, legal reviews, and operational safeguards. These national measures, although diverse, demonstrate increasing recognition of the risks associated with autonomy and help shape broader discussions by showing what regulation looks like in practice [42][43].

4.2.8 Ethical and Normative Frameworks (ICRC, Expert Reports)

Ethical guidelines produced by the ICRC, academic institutions, and multilateral working groups emphasize the necessity of human judgment, transparency, and compliance with humanitarian norms. These frameworks influence state behavior and lay groundwork for eventual legal instruments [44][45].

4.3 Why AI Weapons Triggered Global Concerns

Autonomous Weapon Systems (AWS) pose fundamental global security risks by challenging assumptions about warfare, ethics, and accountability.

a. Delegation of Lethal Decisions: The primary ethical concern is transferring life-and-death decisions to algorithms, raising issues of human dignity and moral responsibility in warfare.
b. Unpredictability and IHL Risks: AI systems can exhibit unpredictable behavior and struggle with contextual judgment, significantly increasing the risk of unintended engagements and violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) by failing to distinguish accurately between combatants and civilians.
c. Escalation Risk: These weapons enable a speed-of-war that surpasses human reaction time, creating a danger of accelerating conflict beyond human control and triggering accidental confrontations between states.
d. Accountability Gaps: When wrongful harm occurs, determining legal responsibility becomes exceptionally difficult, undermining both legal remedies and the enforcement of IHL.
e. Proliferation: The dual-use nature of AI and accessible commercial technology lowers the barrier for non-state actors to acquire and modify these capabilities, further destabilizing global security.

4.4 Levels of Autonomy in Weapon Systems

The degree of autonomy in weapon systems exists on a spectrum, ranging from minimal assistance to full independence. Understanding these levels is crucial for setting international regulatory requirements and assessing compliance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

a. Human-in-the-Loop Systems (HITL):

b. Human-on-the-Loop Systems (HOTL):
c. Human-out-of-the-Loop Systems (HOOTL):
d. Contextual Autonomy Variables:

5. Case Studies

5.1 Libiya: Kargu-2 Incident (2020)

In March 2021, a UN expert group released findings about Turkish-produced STM Kargu-2 drones used in Libya the prior year. These devices targeted withdrawing troops, engaging them at distance through automated functions found in certain armed drone models like the Kargu-2.

The report stated that lethal autonomous weapons could strike targets independently, needing no live link between operator and missile, essentially enabling a 'fire, forget and find' function. Should such actions prove fully self-directed, it would mark the initial verified case of an AI-powered weapon detecting humans on its own and choosing to engage with them.

However, there is still uncertainty.. Although STM denies it being autonomous, claiming the system operates with "Man-in-the-Loop" control. Opinions differ among analysts about whether Kargu-2 acted alone or followed distant operator commands in certain combat cases. This example highlights how hard it is to confirm if self-operating weapons were actually used, alongside limits in global supervision systems [46][47][48].

5.2 Gaza: AI-Assisted Targeting Systems (2023-Present)

Investigative reports point to Israel's military using AI systems such as "Habsora" or "The Gospel" and "Lavender" to help in spotting targets in Gaza. The Gospel system reportedly processes a large amount of surveillance data on buildings, equipment and individuals associated with designated enemy structures and personnel, generating suggestions for targets who will be bombed at a rate that significantly exceeds what human analysts could produce. Lavender is described as an AI-powered database that uses an algorithm to link tens of thousands of residents in Gaza to alleged armed activity, enabling very rapid identification and approval of targets.

UN human rights experts and other critics have raised severe concerns that the reliance on these AI assisted targeting has led to an extraordinarily high civilian death toll and destruction in Gaza. More than 15,000 deaths occurred of which more than half of them were civilian casualties during a period in which these automated systems were being utilised to guide attack choices, hitting homes along with so called "power targets" such as large residential areas and public buildings. Critics argue that machine making fast

decisions and picking from a wide range of people might lead it to skipping the intricate assessments and checks which are required by international humanitarian law.

Israeli officials state that humans ultimately make the targeting decisions and that AI functions only as a decision-support tool rather than an autonomous weapon system. According to public statements and briefings, systems such as Gospen and Lavender are described as tools that aggregate and analyze intelligence data, generate target recommendations, and provide collateral damage estimates after which military personnel review and authorize or reject proposed strikes [49][50][51].

6. Humanitarian, Legal and Geopolitical Implications

6.1 Humanitarian Implications

6.1.1 Civilian Risk

Autonomous weapons pose significant risks to civilian populations. AI systems may lack the contextual judgment necessary to distinguish combatants from civilians in complex situations.Children playing with toy weapons, farmers carrying tools, or journalists with cameras might be misidentified as threats. The speed at which autonomous systems operate may not allow time for the careful assessment that protecting civilians requires.

Human Rights Watch has documented that autonomous weapons systems "present numerous risks to humanity, most of which infringe on fundamental obligations and principles of international human rights law." These include risks to the right to life, dignity, and protection from arbitrary deprivation of life [17][52].

6.1.2 International Humanitarian Law Violation

International humanitarian law (IHL) requires that attacks respect the principles of distinction, proportionality, and precautions, and these rules apply equally to autonomous weapon systems. Distinction requires that parties to a conflict differentiate between combatants and civilians and between military objectives and protected objects such as hospitals, schools, and places of worship, which raises questions about whether AI systems can reliably make such context-dependent judgments. Proportionality involves assessing whether the expected military advantage justifies the anticipated civilian harm, a value-laden and contextual assessment that current AI systems are not designed to perform independently.

The obligation to take constant care to spare civilians also extends to the design, deployment, and operational parameters of autonomous weapons, requiring that these systems be configured and used in a way that supports compliance with IHL. States and commanders remain responsible for ensuring that sufficient human control and oversight exist so that these legal duties can be fulfilled in practice. The ICRC has noted that it remains unclear whether autonomous weapons with little or no human control could ever be used in full conformity with IHL, and has therefore called for clear limitations and safeguards around their development and use [53][54].

6.2 Legal Implications

When autonomous weapons cause unlawful harm, assigning responsibility proves complex due to the multiple individuals and groups involved in the development, deployment, and use of these systems. Unlike traditional weapons, where accountability traces directly to identifiable human decision-makers in targeting chains, autonomous systems distribute responsibility across designers, programmers, military commanders, operators, and political leaders. This diffusion of roles increases the risk of an "accountability gap," making it difficult to pinpoint someone answerable for specific violations. Challenges of tracing algorithms' decision-making further complicate establishing who is at fault in cases of unlawful acts involving these weapons.

Under international humanitarian law, states continue to bear legal responsibility for violations committed by their armed forces, including those involving autonomous weapons. This obligation applies even when no individual perpetrator can be specifically identified or prosecuted, holding the state as an entity accountable for unlawful acts. The effectiveness of state responsibility mechanisms, however, depends on the ability to detect, attribute, and adjudicate violations, which can be technologically and procedurally complicated with autonomous systems. International calls emphasize the need for robust frameworks to track, monitor, and remedy harms caused by these weapons.

Individual criminal liability, a key tool for deterrence and justice, faces new hurdles with autonomous weapon systems. Since these systems may function independent of direct human commands, establishing who among the chain of actors, namely, developer, commander, operator, holds sufficient control to incur criminal liability is often unclear. This uncertainty challenges traditional paths to holding individuals accountable under criminal law for war crimes or unlawful conduct.

Command responsibility remains an established doctrine: military commanders can be held accountable for violations committed by forces under their authority if they knew or should have known about the conduct and failed to prevent or punish it. With the adoption of increasingly complex autonomous systems, determining what commanders "know" about the actions of automated algorithms or what measures qualify as adequate prevention is less clear. Questions persist about how doctrine should evolve when the speed, autonomy, and opacity of AI systems surpass human abilities to supervise or intervene.

Emerging legal and policy discussions recommend strengthening transparency and accountability mechanisms tailored to the nature of autonomous weapons. Suggestions include clearer lines of responsibility across each phase of the system's lifecycle, mandatory human oversight in critical functions, and adaptation or expansion of legal doctrines. Efforts at the United Nations and other international forums continue to address gaps, aiming to ensure that accountability is not lost as technology advances [55][56][57][58][59].

6.3 Security and Geopolitical Implications

6.3.1 Arms Race Dynamics

Autonomous weapons may trigger destabilizing arms races. Major military powers, including the United States, China, Russia, Israel, South Korea, and others, are investing heavily in autonomous weapons development. Without international regulation, competitive pressures create incentives for rapid deployment regardless of safety concerns or humanitarian implications.

The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots warns that autonomous weapons could "lower the threshold for the use of force and escalate existing conflicts."Systems that reduce risk to one's own forces may make military action politically easier, potentially increasing conflict frequency [60][61].

6.3.2 Escalation Risk

Autonomous systems operating at machine speed may not allow time for diplomatic de-escalation during crises. If autonomous defensive systems automatically respond to perceived threats, minor incidents could escalate rapidly before human decision-makers can intervene. The interaction of autonomous systems from multiple parties creates additional unpredictability [62][63].

6.3.3 Proliferation Concerns

Unlike nuclear weapons, which require rare materials and sophisticated industrial capacity, autonomous weapons may be relatively accessible to both state actors and other groups. The dual-use nature of AI means that commercially available technologies can be adapted for weapons. This accessibility raises concerns about proliferation to authoritarian regimes and other armed groups [64][65].

6.3.4 Strategic Stability

Some analysts argue that autonomous weapons could undermine strategic stability by creating first-strike advantages or enabling attacks that human operators would refuse to execute. Others suggest autonomous defensive systems could enhance

stability by providing reliable deterrence. The net effect on international security remains contested and may depend significantly on the specific characteristics of deployed systems and the regulatory frameworks governing their use [66][67].

7. Past UN and International Actions

7.1 CCW Group of Governmental Experts on LAWS (Since 2014)

The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) has served as the primary multilateral forum for discussions on lethal autonomous weapons systems since formal attention began in 2014. Key developments include:

2014: CCW established a Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) dedicated to examining lethal autonomous weapons systems. This marked the beginning of formal international attention to autonomous weapons as a distinct category requiring regulatory consideration.

2014-2019: Annual GGE meetings produced technical analyses and recommendations but lacked binding force. Discussions identified key issues including meaningful human control, compliance with international humanitarian law, and accountability mechanisms.

2019: The GGE adopted 11 guiding principles on LAWS, establishing that international humanitarian law continues to apply fully to autonomous weapons, that human responsibility must be retained, and that accountability cannot be transferred to machines. These principles, while non-binding, established important normative foundations.

2021-2023: Negotiations stalled as major military powers, including Russia and the United States, resisted binding measures. The CCW's consensus requirement allowed objecting states to block proposals supported by the majority.

2024**:** Growing frustration with CCW deadlock prompted efforts to move discussions to the UN General Assembly, where majority voting can overcome opposition from blocking states.

A critical limitation of the CCW process is its consensus-based decision-making, which allows any single state to prevent progress even when the overwhelming majority supports action. This structural feature explains why, despite a decade of discussions, no binding CCW protocol on autonomous weapons has emerged.

7.2 UN General Assembly Debates and Secretary-General Statements

The UN Secretary-General and General Assembly have played increasingly prominent roles in addressing autonomous weapons:

2018 Statement: Secretary-General António Guterres made an unprecedented statement characterizing lethal autonomous weapons systems as "politically unacceptable and morally repugnant," calling for their prohibition under international law. This statement elevated autonomous weapons from a technical discussion to a priority issue on the global security agenda.

2023 New Agenda for Peace: In his policy brief on the New Agenda for Peace, Secretary-General Guterres recommended that states conclude a legally binding international instrument by 2026 to prohibit lethal autonomous weapon systems that function without human control or which cannot comply with international humanitarian law.

December 2023, Resolution 78/241: The UN General Assembly adopted its first resolution specifically on lethal autonomous weapons systems, with 152 votes in favor, 4 against (Belarus, India, Mali, Russian Federation), and 11 abstentions including China, Israel, and North Korea. The resolution affirmed that international law applies to autonomous weapons and requested the Secretary-General to prepare a substantive report.

December 2, 2024, LAWS Resolution: The General Assembly adopted a resolution on lethal autonomous weapons systems with overwhelming support: 166 votes in favor, only 3 opposed (Belarus, North Korea, Russian Federation), and 15 abstentions. This resolution created a new forum under UN auspices to discuss necessary actions on autonomous weapons regulation.

December 24, 2024, Resolution 79/239: The General Assembly adopted its first-ever resolution specifically addressing artificial intelligence in the military domain. The resolution affirmed the applicability of international law throughout all stages of AI system lifecycles and encouraged states to address opportunities and challenges related to military AI.

7.3 NGO Inputs and Civil Society Campaigns

Civil society organizations have played a catalytic role in advancing international attention to autonomous weapons:

Campaign to Stop Killer Robots

Launched in 2012, the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots coordinates more than 270 nongovernmental organizations across 70 countries. Human Rights Watch serves as a founding member and coordinates the coalition. The campaign's objectives include:

a. Negotiation of a new international treaty prohibiting and regulating autonomous weapons systems
b. Development of legal and other norms ensuring meaningful human control over force
c. Prevention of "digital dehumanization" in military decision-making

The campaign introduced the concept of "meaningful human control" into international discussions, a framing that has been adopted by numerous governments and now shapes diplomatic negotiations.

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

The ICRC, guardian of international humanitarian law, has consistently emphasized that autonomous weapons raise fundamental questions about legal compliance. ICRC President Mirjana Spoljaric Egger has reiterated calls for a legally binding instrument by 2026.

Article 36

Named after the weapons review requirement in Additional Protocol I, Article 36 has contributed technical and legal expertise to international discussions. The organization introduced the "meaningful human control" concept that has become central to diplomatic negotiations.

Amnesty International

Amnesty International has emphasized human rights implications of autonomous weapons, arguing that such systems present risks to the rights to life, dignity, and freedom from arbitrary deprivation of life. Amnesty submitted recommendations to the Secretary-General following Resolution 78/241 emphasizing the need for binding prohibitions.

8. Questions a Resolution Must Answer (QARMA)

1. What mandatory transparency mechanisms should states adopt regarding the training data, testing environments, and algorithmic safety reviews of their AI-enabled weapons to build trust and mitigate international security risks?
2. What criteria and thresholds must be met by an AI weapon system to demonstrate reliable compliance with the principles of Distinction and Proportionality in complex, congested urban warfare settings?
3. How can the UN support developing nations that lack advanced AI capabilities in building capacity for threat assessment, IHL review, and defense against autonomous weapon systems?
4. How can member states commit to translating DISEC's political consensus into concrete updates of national Article 36 Weapons Review procedures for autonomous systems?
5. What state-level or corporate-level liability framework must be established to ensure accountability for violations of IHL caused by an autonomous system's action?

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