

THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY FIRST COMMITTEE (DISEC)

STUDY GUIDE
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Study guide of the topics

The Dangers of Artificial Intelligence in the Development of Modern Weapons

The Proliferation of Chemical and Biological Weapons by Non-State Actors

of the Disarmament and International Security Committee

Abeer Shehadeh

&

Assaf Oren



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Welcome letter

Most Esteemed Delegates,

It is our great pleasure as chairs of the disarmament and international security committee to welcome you all to the 2019 session of uc3mun. We are very excited to be part of the big family of uc3mun and we hope you are ready to experience 4 days of fruitful, and hopefully heated, debate.

This year's edition, our committee will discuss two important topics:

1) The Dangers of Artificial Intelligence in the Development of Modern Weapons

2) The Proliferation of Chemical and Biological Weapons by Non-State Actors

This study guide is meant to help you better understand the background of the topics, but is not enough for your research. You are expected to do your own research and understand the position of the country you are representing better than what this guide can provide.

Don't forget to follow the policy of your country and this committee and bring the best into our committee and conference. We, as the chairs of this committee and the secretariat team of the conference, are enthusiastic to have all of you with us.

Best,
Abeer & Assaf



II. COMPETENCE, FUNCTIONS AND STRUCTURE OF THE COMMITTEE

The United Nations General Assembly First Committee, also known as the Disarmament and International Security Committee or DISEC, is one of six main committees at the General Assembly of the United Nations. The General Assembly (GA) was established under Chapter IV of the United Nations Charter and is the main organ of the UN, as it has representation from every UN Member State.

DISEC deals with disarmament, global challenges and threats to peace that affect the international community, while seeking the most adequate solutions to these global issues. Being an essential committee of the GA, DISEC has an important role of addressing international security issues and making recommendations either to Member States or to the Security Council or both (UN General Assembly Website, 2018).

Working in close cooperation with the United Nations Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament, DISEC is an internationally recognized platform where Member States can discuss their positions on disarmament-related matters and come up with proposals to better understand and tackle the threats to global peace and security.

DISEC resolutions require a simple majority to be passed and all UN Member States and observers have an equal vote in the committee. Although resolutions adopted by DISEC are not legally binding, they set a normative standard to be followed by the international community and they can indicate the establishment of customs and guidelines for appropriate action (Reaching Critical Will, 2018).



III. TOPIC A: THE DANGERS OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN WEAPONS

A. BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

“Computers will overtake humans with Artificial Intelligence within the next hundred years. When that happens, we need to make sure the computers have goals aligned with ours” (Hawking, 2015). This quote by the renowned physicist, Stephen Hawking, reflects the dangers of the advancement of Artificial Intelligence and the threat it may pose to future of humanity.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to the ability of a digital computer or a computer-controlled robot to perform tasks commonly associated with intelligent beings. When it comes to military purposes, Artificial Intelligence is used to create advanced weapon systems that can detect, select and engage targets without direct human control. These kinds of weapons are commonly referred to as **Lethal Autonomous Weapons (LAWs)**.

Autonomous weapons based on AI have been in the making since the 1980s when the U.S. Navy developed the Tomahawk Anti-Ship Missile, which could be fired from a ship to a remote destination and automatically target and destroy enemy vessels. Since then, more advanced weapons using AI technology have been created by military powers around the world, including the South Korean SGR-A1 robot installed along the border with North Korea and the Israeli Harpy drone designed to attack radar systems (Wolverton, 2018).

LAWs have been in the center of international attention during the past decade as a result of their rapid development, the damage they can cause and the ethical questions they raise, turning this issue into one of the biggest



challenges for the international community that requires appropriate measures to be taken.

B. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Autonomous weapons have been described as the third revolution in warfare after gunpowder and nuclear bombs. Therefore, many researchers and analysts claim that a global Artificial Intelligence arms race has already begun. States with great military power have been developing advanced weapon systems based on AI technology, creating a technological gap between their military capabilities and that of states without these kinds of futuristic weapons.

The United States is considered to be at the forefront of AI research, leading the way in military AI development. The U.S possesses many military AI combat programs, one of the most advanced among them is the "Sea Hunter", an autonomous warship designed to operate for long periods at sea without a single crew member. However, despite U.S dominance in this field, other military powers are catching up to their standards at a rapid pace (Upchurch, 2018).

China and Russia are both in the midst of intense military production in the field of AI and LAWS. China, on its part, is using this advanced technology to develop a range of unmanned ground, aerial and underwater machines that are becoming increasingly autonomous, turning itself into an important actor in this field. Catching rapidly up to speed, Russia has been developing AI-guided missiles that can decide to switch targets mid-flight and frequently conducts experiments on its autonomous and semi-autonomous combat systems (Simonite, 2017).



Despite the growing arms race in this field, it is important to mention that although AI is used in weapon systems for a variety of narrow tasks, weapons with the ability to function fully autonomously require much more advanced technology. Therefore, there is disagreement among military experts whether full autonomy in AI weapon systems can be achieved in the next decade or if it is even possible at all (Human Rights Watch, 2012).

C. MAIN MEASURES ADOPTED BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

To date, there is no weapons treaty that explicitly prohibits LAWs or the use of autonomy in weapon systems. However, several steps have been taken by the international community addressing this topic.

Open Letter on Artificial Intelligence

During the 2015 International Conference on Artificial Intelligence (IJCAI), an open letter was presented calling for a ban on offensive autonomous weapons in order to prevent a military AI arms race. This letter was signed by 3,978 AI researchers and industry leaders such as Stephen Hawking, Elon Musk and Steve Wozniak. The letter stated that although AI has great potential to benefit humanity in many ways, AI weapons beyond meaningful human control pose a major threat and should be banned (Future of Life Institute, 2015).

United Nations Convention on Conventional Weapons (UN CCW)

The UN CCW deals with prohibitions or restrictions on the use of certain conventional weapons which may be excessively dangerous or have indiscriminate effects. In 2016, this forum established a Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) to address emerging technologies in the area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons. The GGE held its first meeting in November 2017 in



Geneva and discussed the question of a common definition of LAWs and the humanitarian and international security challenges posed by such weapons (GGE on LAWs, 2017). The latest report of the GGE was published in October and followed their meetings in April and August of 2018. The report deals with issues of accountability, guiding principles regarding LAWs, international law and security challenges posed by these weapons (GGE, 2018).

D. CONTROVERSIES AND ACTORS INVOLVED

The use of AI technologies in the development of modern weapons is highly controversial and the main conflict is between military necessity and moral concerns. Those in the defense community that support autonomous weapons, claim that it provides prominent military advantages. These advantages include reducing manpower for a given mission, expanding the battlefield by reaching areas previously inaccessible and minimizing casualties by removing human fighters from dangerous missions. Moreover, supporters of LAWs argue that they are morally acceptable and even ethically preferable to human fighters since they aren't affected by human emotions such as fear and can be controlled to act more "humanely" on the battlefield (Etzioni, 2017).

On the other hand, the main argument against the use of LAWs is the moral and ethical challenges they raise. According to many researchers in this field, allowing AI to make decisions about destroying targets is unethical and will eventually eliminate human control over these weapons, causing civilian casualties and collateral damage (Etzioni, 2017).

The international community is divided heavily upon this topic and states have different stances on how to tackle this issue. Countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, China, Russia, Israel and South Korea have all been developing AI weapons and generally oppose a ban on such weapons. Some



of these countries have their own definition of LAWs and claim that current international law is sufficient and provides a clear guideline on the use of autonomous weapons (UNIDIR, 2017).

On the contrary, many countries in Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Latin America have called upon a ban on autonomous weapons, stating that they pose a threat to humanity and their use is unethical. Some of these countries include Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Egypt, Algeria, Pakistan, Uganda, Zimbabwe and Mexico. The human rights organization Amnesty International also supported the campaign to ban autonomous weapons (Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, 2017).

Autonomous weapons and International Law

As military superpowers continue to push forward their development of autonomous weapon systems, questions surrounding how these new weapons will be regulated are becoming more notable. At the heart of this debate is the concept that these highly autonomous systems must have “meaningful human control”, a term that is central to the ongoing regulation discussion (Cebul, 2018).

The law of war is well-established and whatever system being used, whether autonomous or not, has to comply with the fundamental law of armed conflict and humanitarian legal requirements such as distinction, proportionality, and precautions against attacks on civilians (Piccone, 2018).

While any new weapon system introduced to a battlefield must follow the principles found in current law, autonomous weapons present unique challenges regarding accountability. The spectrum of accountability spreads between the software engineers designing the weapons, the operators in the field carrying out such attacks and the commanders who are in charge of



them (Ibid). Many questions regarding regulation of these weapons have yet to be determined by the international community.

E. GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What is your country's policy regarding the development of AI weapons?
- Does your country have its own definition for LAWs?
- Has your country taken any measures in regulating the use of AI weapons?
- Is the current International Humanitarian Law sufficient enough to regulate AI weapons?
- What solutions are there to prevent LAWs from becoming a threat?
- What measures can this committee take in order to ensure your country's interest isn't harmed?

F. FURTHER READING

- Campaign to Stop Killer Robots: www.stopkillerrobots.org
- Group of Governmental Experts Report: <http://undocs.org/CCW/GGE.1/2017/3>
- Human Rights Watch "Losing Humanity – The case against killer robots": https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/arms1112_ForUpload.pdf
- The Weaponization of Increasingly Autonomous Technologies: Concerns, Characteristics and Definitional Approaches: <http://www.unidir.org/files/publications/pdfs/the-weaponization-of-increasingly-autonomous-technologies-concerns-characteristics-and-definitional-approaches-en-689.pdf>



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Wired. (August 8th, 2018). *How China could beat the West in the deadly race for AI weapons.* <https://www.wired.co.uk/article/artificial-intelligence-weapons-warfare-project-maven-google-china>



TOPIC B: The Proliferation of Chemical and biological weapons by non-state actors

Background and History

Simply put, chemical and biological warfare is the military use of chemicals, toxins, poisons, viruses or bacteria in an intention to injure or kill civilians or soldiers. In other words, they can cause massive destruction in property and large-scale death. While these weapons are used in wars between countries, the main problematic issue lies in the use of non-state actors of such weapons. These weapons are perfect for those who seek terror because of several factors. First, they are easily reached, second they are transportable and third they are fair priced. The acceptable definition of a non-state actor is “An individual or organization that has significant political influence but is not allied to any particular country or state” (Oxford Dictionary). Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and multinational corporations (MNCs) are also considered as types of NSAs. (Croddy, 2002) We, however, focus only on violent non-state actors, such as armed groups or criminal organizations.

The First World War marks the first modern use of chemical weapons, and more specifically in Belgium. For the following few years in the war, there were several reports regarding an extensive use of chemicals. Due to the use of mustard gas, chlorine and phosgene, more than a million casualties and over 90,000 deaths were caused. A similar condition occurred during the Second World War. More recently, United States used Agent Orange in Vietnam; Iraq used chemical weapons against its own people under Saddam Hussein; and most recently, reports state that chemical weapons was used during the Syrian conflict. (Faith, 2014)

The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), being the implementing body for the Chemical Weapons Convention, inspects the global endeavour to eliminate chemical weapons permanently. OPCW promotes and verifies the adherence to the Chemical Weapons Convention,



which prohibits the use of chemical weapons and requires their destruction. (OPCW Website)

Under the verification of OPCW, more than 95% of all chemical weapons have been destroyed. The OPCW received the Nobel Prize for Peace in 2013 as a recognition of its thorough efforts in eliminating chemical weapons.

Similarly, biological weapons are very accessible to terrorist groups nowadays. These weapons are cheap and can be delivered more easily than other weapons and have a strong psychological impact. The worst biological attacks in the whole history of the United States marks after the 9/11 attacks when they used letters containing anthrax spores, which is infectious and caused a large-scale harm. (Appel, 2009)

Recent developments

When it comes to the use of chemical biological or other mass destruction weapons recently, it is legitimate to think first of the situation in Syria. We will focus on the non-state actors and their possession or use of such weapons. ISIS, ISIL, or any other name given to this terrorist group, is a branch of the bigger and older terrorist group, Al Qaeda. As they always claim, they intend to create a new big Islamic state that follows the Islamic Law of the 8th century. This group has committed several crimes and accepted their responsibility, such as many cases of beheadings, public executions, and crucifixions of what they call the enemies of the Islamic State. Most of the victims, however, are civilians and foreign journalists. (Binder et al, 2018)

Post World War 2, mass destruction weapons were used in several conflicts and by several terrorist organizations, not only the Islamic State and as mentioned, most recently, they were used during the Syrian conflict and caused harm in people and land. (Reed, 2014) Even though many terrorist groups were accused of committing similar horrible crimes in Syria, some actors including the United States the European Union have accused the Syrian government, led by Bashar Al-Assad, to be the one who conducted chemical attacks on its



own people. The reaction of the international community was strict and assertive. Al-Assad declined those statements though. (Spencer, 2013)

Two years into the Syrian Civil War, and specifically in 2013, Syria joined the Chemical Weapons Convention and thus the process of destroying the chemical weapons it possesses initiated. A few years later, the United States launched an attack against the forces of the Syrian government as a response to the Kahn Shakhun chemical attack. On 14 April 2018, and as a response to the chemical attacks in Douma, the United States, France, and the United Kingdom joined together and launched several military strikes against some of the known sites of the Syrian government. (Brooks, 2018)

Today, even after the situation calmed down, the international community is still worried since chemical and biological weapons are still in the market and available to be reached by terrorists and therefore pose a serious threat. (Reed, 2014)

Of course, not only organizations that have been labeled internationally, as terrorist organizations are a threat, but also rebel groups and militants who are armed and possess mass destructions weapons are another threat. The danger of these groups is always prevalent during civil wars and conflicted regions. Post-war regions are also fragile to such threats. In general, those rebel groups take advantage of the unsecure and politically unstable condition of a specific area, and use weapons in order to have political control over the area. One of the remarkable examples is Al Shabaab in Somalia, which is a militant group and is considered as "the deadliest jihadi group in sub-Saharan Africa". It largely operates in Somalia, which is still facing a civil war since the 1980s. Al Shabaab is also known for attacking brutally in the neighboring country, Kenya and have caused a big number of victims. (Rashid, 2015)



As a result, the UN is still working on implementing the resolutions on prohibiting the possession of mass destruction weapons, especially that as of today 25 countries are known to possess or believed to possess chemical weapons and 17 to have biological weapons. Some of these countries include China, US, Russia, North Korea, Iran, India, and more. The use of such weapons has negative effects on the health of civilians on the long-term and cause serious health issues. (Curry 2016)

Main Measures Adopted by the international community

As mentioned earlier, the international community has taken several steps in order to prohibit and eliminate the possession and use of mass destruction weapons. Since the First World War, there has been a discussion on the topic, but main measures were only taken more recently than that. Some measures/conventions were targeted to chemical weapons, some to biological weapon and some other to the general mass destruction weapons (which also include nuclear weapons).

In 1997, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) was formed in order to be the intergovernmental official body of implementing the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). All UN member states, except for Israel, North Korea, Egypt and South Sudan, are members in this organization. This organization is not an agency of the United Nations, but they cooperate on some practical and policy issues. OPCW and the United Nations signed an agreement of their cooperation back in 2000. The agreement outlines the coordination of their activities. The Regional Groups of the United Nations also operate at the OPCW in order to govern the rotations on the Executive Council. They also provide in one way or another an informal platform for discussions to further research and investigate the situation. (Collina, 2011)

The first multilateral disarmament treaty, however, that banned the development and production of an entire category of mass destruction



weapons, and mainly biological, was the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), which was signed back in 1972 and came into force in 1975. It prohibits the development, production, acquisition, transfer, retention, stockpiling and use of biological and toxin weapons. This convention is a key element in the international community's efforts to address the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Both CWC and BWC have shown some success at times and some failure in others. Hence, the threat of the production and use of such weapons is still relevant. (NTI)

The United Nations has discussed this topic in many of its sessions and in several committees, mainly in DISEC. There were several resolutions that it adopted and are worth reading and understanding for our conference. Here is a list of these resolutions and a short summary of their purpose.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTIONS ON THE BWC:

A/RES/65/92 (2010)
A/RES/64/70 (2009)
A/RES/63/88 (2008)
A/RES/62/60 (2007)
A/RES/61/102 (2006)
A/DEC/56/414 (2001)

Regarding the CWC and the Chemical Weapons topic, the United Nations General Assembly has a new resolution every year, since 2000 until today. Some of them are:

A/RES/72/43 (2017)
A/RES/71/69 (2016)
A/RES/70/41 (2015)
A/RES/69/67 (2014)
A/RES/68/45 (2013)

These resolutions mainly “Condemn in the strongest possible terms the use of chemical weapons by anyone under any circumstances” and “Notes the impact of scientific and technological progress on the effective implementation of the Convention”. They stress the importance of the



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Convention and its validity in international law. Serious steps would be taken against any country that violates the terms of the Convention. (UNGA Website)

The Security Council also discussed the topic extensively and reached several resolutions, including the famous Resolution 1540. This SC Resolution was adopted unanimously in 2004. It clearly establishes the obligations for all Member States, based on Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, to enforce and develop legal and regulatory measures against the proliferation of any kind of mass destruction weapons, including biological, chemical, radiological, and nuclear. This is to ensure the weapons of mass destruction don't spread to non-state actors. (UN Website)

Controversies and Actors Involved

Several countries, including those who signed the BWC and CWC, do possess chemical and/or biological weapons. Some are known to possess them, whether they declared it themselves or not, such as Albania, India, Iran, North Korea, Libya, Russia, Syria and United States.

Some other countries, however, were accused of using chemical and/or biological weapons in their conflicts/wars, such as: Angola, Israel, Pakistan, Sudan, Taiwan, Serbia and Montenegro, and more.

China has been accused of advancing chemical weapons but they claimed they have destroyed them before ratifying the Convention. It has only declared two former chemical production facilities.

It is believed that Egypt still possesses limited stockpiles of chemical bombs, rockets and shells for several reasons. First, it has refused to sign the Chemical Weapons Convention and it has always been an exporter of chemical



weapons in the Middle East and Africa. It is not certain, though, whether it still possesses any or not.

Guiding Questions

- What is your country's policy regarding the possession and use of chemical and biological weapons?
- Does your country possess any weapons? What is your country's argument about having, or refusing to have, such weapons?
- Has your country taken any measures in prohibiting the use of mass destruction weapons?
- Are the current organizations, such as OPCW, sufficient enough to eradicate chemical weapons?
- What measures can this committee take in order to ensure your country's interest isn't harmed?

Further Reading

- 1) UNODA on Chemical Weapons:
<https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/chemical/>
- 2) UNODA on Biological Weapons:
<https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/bio/>
- 3) Arms Control Association on Chemical and Biological Weapons:
<https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/cbwprolif>
- 4) Convention on the Prohibition of Developing or Using Chemical Weapons
https://www.opcw.org/sites/default/files/documents/CWC/CWC_en.pdf
- 5) General Assembly Resolution A/RES/71/69
<http://undocs.org/A/RES/71/69>



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(11) Spencer, Richard (29 October 2013). "Syria: inspectors find 1,300 tons of chemical weapons". Telegraph. Retrieved 31 October 2013.

(12) United Nations Website.

VI. POSITION PAPER

A position paper is a document that summarizes your country's policy on the topics and your plan of action you will introduce to the committee (your solutions).

Your position paper should include:

1. A general overview of the topic,
2. How the topic affects your country,
3. What is your country's policy on the topic,
4. The solutions you propose to the committee.

The length of the position paper is two pages maximum (one page per topic).

Position Paper format:

Sample Position Paper:

Committee: European Council

Topic: Addressing nationalism and anti-EU sentiment within EU member states

Country: United Kingdom

Name of Delegate: Diletta Muccilli

Rising Euroscepticism poses an existential threat to the European Union. Problems as the declining legitimacy of the European institutions, the outcome of the financial crisis, or the collapse of recognised political parties will continue to affect the direction



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of European politics for decades to come if the European Council does not take action now.

As a matter of fact, without an understanding of EU's broader structural and institutional problems, we cannot hope to comprehend what has happened in the United Kingdom with Brexit.

Historically, our country has been a leading critic of European integration, since it firmly believes that the creation of the European Union has obliged member states to transfer too much national sovereignty to supranational institutions. And by appealing to Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty, we have decided to re-establish our nation as a truly independent one. The benefits United Kingdom has obtained until now concerning security, trade, consumer goods, and budget are tremendous, and it expects to get even more when the whole process finishes.

However, we want to make the point that the United Kingdom is leaving the EU but not Europe. We are leaving just a complex institutional relationship with lots of entanglements to return to traditional relations between individual states. And to protect these relations, the United Kingdom will like to encourage all of its neighbour states to trade off further integration: in return for greater powers for the EU in policy areas where supranational control would be most beneficial, the EU would devolve power to member states in other policy areas, in particular where there is domestic controversy.



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The United Kingdom knows it is not the only country having so little faith in the European institutions. For this reason, this process of decentralisation should expand throughout the years, until each European state finally regains its national sovereignty and we, together, will finally be able to put an end to the present underestimation of national powers.



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