

“The Lethal Artificial Intelligence Problem”

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It is an honor for me to address you today, in beautiful Geneva where I lived for many years and to where I bring my students to study the UN!

This summer will be the tenth year and I hope they can meet you!

My articles on the magazine Foreign Affairs and in other leading journals represent my findings, and are at your disposal

I also wrote an 8,000 word paper that serves as the basis for this presentation that contains my database of 22 treaties that I examined and coded. Treaties that are of a precautionary_nature

These treaties - that range from nuclear weapons free-zones to the prohibition of the placement of weapons on Antarctica and on the moon to the making of indiscriminate weapons unlawful - achieved one or all of **THREE GOALS**:

prevented further militarization,

made weaponization unlawful, and

stopped proliferation USING cooperative frameworks of transparency and common global norms.

As a result of my findings, it is clear that there is a significant emerging global norm:

the utilization of disarmament and preventive regulations as a tool and mechanism to protect civilians.

The development of lethal autonomous weapons would severely jeopardize this global norm,

because they will pose fundamental problems for the stability of the international system and will alter regional security dynamics.

The United Nations has celebrated its 70th anniversary, its long and fruitful existence has led to the construction of an edifice of peace and security

The development of lethal autonomous weapons will undermine the legal and political architecture of peace and security built during the life of the United Nations.

This edifice of peace and security is built upon **three pillars**.

The first pillar upholding peace and security is anchored on the restraint of the use of force AND on the practice of peaceful settlement of disputes.

The adoption of lethal autonomous weapons will mean the lowering of the established thresholds for the use of force.

This will happen mainly in the following ways:

If force can be employed in a very targeted way, it is **likely** that it will be used more often and with less **inhibitions**.

The disintegration of the important global norm of restraint on the use of force will make fragile conflict situations more precarious.

In sum, the severe erosion of the existing thresholds for the “lawful” use of force will contribute to weakening the existing system of global rule of law

where solving disputes and problems peacefully should take precedence over the use of force

The second pillar, which is efforts to sustain peace and security is formed by a dense web of global norms that states operate in.

Some behaviors that were considered normal, such as piracy, torture, slavery, and imperial annexation are now prohibited under international law.

Of particular concern is under what conditions new lethal autonomous weapons will alter the foundational global norms that comprise the rules of state responsibility, international protection of human rights and international humanitarian law (IHL)

– the architectures of which would be particularly disrupted.

Sustaining global peace requires transparency, confidence building, and security mechanisms.

Much of this stabilizing framework has been set and constructed at the regional level.

At the global level, transparency norms could become more problematic with the advent of lethal autonomous weapons.

For instance, the customary obligation under IHL Article 36 or legal weapons reviews, as a global mechanism, to assess whether new weapons are compliant with IHL.

The problem with this approach is, however, only a few states carry out such weapons reviews at all.

Moreover, information gathered during these national processes is likely to be classified.

Therefore, relying on weapons reviews is unlikely to satisfy the global norm of transparency.

The third pillar of peace and security today is comprised of the efforts to foster cooperation in cultural, economic, social, and environmental matters that affect all humanity.

Two recent major achievements by all member states of the United Nations must be highlighted:

the new UN Sustainable Development Goals, and the Paris Agreements on Climate Change.

UN member states agreed to focus all their energies to implement them in the next years.

With this new framework, nations have one of the greatest opportunities in history to promote a better future for humanity

The development of autonomous lethal weapons at this critical juncture for humanity would divert the world's resources.

The United Nations Charter article 26 represents a foundational normative guide.

It calls on all states,

to create a system for the regulation of armaments
to ensure that as little of the world's human and economic resources are
diverted

United Nations member states have achieved some strides in reaching Article 26's mandate, but much more needs to be done.

Distinguished HCP, here are my concluding remarks:

Another arms race will make everyone less secure and leave the world worse off.

IN THE UNLIKELY EVENT that Lethal autonomous weapons comply with IHL and HRL they

will have a disintegrating effect on the commonly agreed global norms of international law.

Especially those on the restraint of the use of force and on the protection of civilians

Further, their creation will give rise to tremendous uncertainty at the regional levels.

This is an era that is focused on increasing regional frameworks focused on improving peace and security.

A preventative prohibition based upon the precautionary principle of international law, and upon previous treaties where prevention brought stability to all countries **SHOULD BE ADOPTED**

This is about what humanity wants the future of peace and security to look like.

A new preventive treaty that will prohibit lethal autonomous weapons would be this forum's greatest achievement.