

Update brief: UN Security Council

As we mentioned throughout the Study guide, the topic from which we will develop the committee sessions during the next few days is of great interest today. This is so not only because countries develop new technologies in gigantic steps with very little time, but we also find that there is a need to apply technology in our day-to-day lives. Unfortunately, these new advances that would help us to offer solutions to the global needs, are used at will of the countries with the most resources (which normally are the wealthiest) so that they can only benefit. This is precisely the case of technology applied to warfare, and specifically artificial intelligence (AI) in autonomous weapons.

Since the Study Guide was published we have found ourselves immersed in a situation that has paralyzed the lives of the citizens of all the countries of the world. However, this does not mean that technology has not advanced: existing wars have continued to take place and even through AI weapons, it has been possible to worsen the situation of those societies that were already precarious.

The short-term difference between AI and previous technological innovations is that AI is interactive, incremental, and, most importantly, an enabler of all parts of the war. Moore's Law states that the processing power of computers can double every eighteen months, due to this interactive cycle and the continuous advancement in AI skills and applications, the speed at which the soldier receives the technology is paramount. An example of the impact of AI applied to weapons is unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). These have been a game changer at every level, from the Marine Corps and Army Infantry Platoons to potential future fighter jets. The ability to strike terrorist targets virtually anywhere in the world from Nevada-controlled UAVs has enabled the United States to wage a war against terrorists that puts no one except collateral casualties at risk (recall the case of General Soleimani in Iraq in January 2020).¹

In addition, special emphasis should be placed on unmanned robots, supported by AI, which will play an increasingly important role in ground warfare. It is important to highlight the missions that are being carried out through the defense ministries and national security agencies of the United States, Russia and China to test hypersonic missiles. Such missiles, which travel at speeds of Mach 10 or more, will make a defensive response nearly impossible, given the time between detection and hitting the target.²

Countries are advancing incomparable steps in the field of artificial intelligence applied to autonomous weapons, which in a short period of time is going to have consequences that will have a greater impact on the international arena than it has had so far.

¹ Use of armed drones for targeted killings. Report of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions. Link of the paper written by A. Callamard, of the General Assembly (A/HRC/44/38): <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G20/211/32/PDF/G2021132.pdf?OpenElement>

² US Air Force to Test New Hypersonic Missile. Stashwick, S. , The Diplomat, December 17th, 2020. Link for the news:

<https://thediplomat.com/2020/12/us-air-force-to-test-new-hypersonic-missile/>

Russia reports successful test launch of hypersonic missile. October 7th, 2020. Link for the news:

<https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2020/10/07/russia-reports-successful-test-launch-of-hypersonic-missile/>