

Warfare in the Age of AI: A Critical Evaluation of Arkin's Case for Ethical Autonomy in Unmanned Systems

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Abstract. The threat posed by Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems (LAWS) is among the most severe challenges facing humanity today. Climate change, geopolitical instability and economic recessions all form part of the current 'permacrisis.' I would like to add 'threats from AI weaponry' to this list. This paper importantly explores in-depth the ethical issues and possible negative consequences of allowing the development and deployment of AI weaponry. In this paper, I demonstrate that the use of LAWS in warfare is unethical and that it violates not only human rights and International Humanitarian Law (IHL) but human dignity as well. I do this by first examining Roland C. Arkin's article. I then explore the debate on LAWS from a consequentialist ethical perspective. I outline the arguments both in opposition and in support of the deployment of LAWS to determine the outcome of the moral calculus that much of the debate has been centred around. I then explore the principled arguments against the use of LAWS. These arguments focus on possible violations of human rights, IHL and human dignity. The final section offers a way forward in terms of how a ban on LAWS might be implemented and the role of governments, academics, and the public.

Keywords: Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems, Artificial Intelligence, Human Rights, International Humanitarian Law.