
**ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS (UN) IN THE
REGULATION OF AI-BASED AUTONOMOUS WEAPONS
(CASE STUDY OF THE WAR BETWEEN RUSSIA AND UKRAINE)**

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Abstract

This study examines the role of the United Nations (UN) in regulating AI-based autonomous weapons in the Russia-Ukraine war, ongoing since 2014 and fully escalated in 2022. The central issue is the UN's suboptimal role in enforcing such regulations amid a conflict that directly illustrates the massive deployment of this technology in modern warfare. This study employs the Pluralism perspective and the Theory of International Organization Functions as its analytical framework, emphasizing that non-state actors such as the UN play a significant role in shaping global governance. A descriptive qualitative method was applied through library research, analyzing official UN documents, scientific journals, and relevant academic sources. The findings reveal that the UN has performed four main roles: as a diplomatic forum through the CCW and GGE platforms, as an enforcer of international law through General Assembly resolutions, as a shaper of international norms, and as a facilitator of interstate cooperation. However, these roles remain suboptimal due to four key factors: divergent political interests among UN member states, the absence of binding international regulations on AI-based autonomous weapons, the UN's limited enforcement authority under international law, and Russia's use of its veto power, which structurally paralyzes the Security Council. This study concludes that the UN's effectiveness in regulating advanced weaponry remains severely limited and requires institutional reform alongside stronger collective commitment from all member states.

Keywords: *United Nations, AI-Based Autonomous Weapons, International Regulation, Russia- Ukraine War, International Humanitarian Law*

INTRODUCTION

International Relations is the study of the interactions between various actors participating in international politics, including nations, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, sub-national entities, and individuals. The study of International Relations aims to examine international behavior, including cooperation, alliance formation, war, conflict, and interactions within international organizations (Indrayani, 2024).

In this modern era, the technological revolution has significantly changed the way war is waged. The use of artificial intelligence (AI)-based weapons has begun to be deployed by several countries involved in conflict. AI-based autonomous weapons are weapons systems that, once activated, can independently search for, select, and even attack targets based on pre-programmed criteria without direct human control.

The use of AI-based autonomous weapons poses serious challenges to the principles of International Humanitarian Law (IHL), particularly the principles of distinction, proportionality, and precaution. Without adequate regulation and control, AI in warfare can create uncontrolled conflict dynamics, increase civilian casualties, and open the possibility of massive violations of international humanitarian law.

The Russia-Ukraine war has become one of the world's most highly publicized armed conflicts and is considered the first to rely heavily on AI-based autonomous weapons. The war, which began in 2014 and escalated fully in 2022, has served as a real laboratory for the development and testing of AI weapons technology. Since 2013, the UN Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) has been discussing Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS). However, to date, no binding consensus has been reached, as major powers such as the United States, Russia, and China oppose a complete ban, believing it would hamper their military innovation (Jackson, 2023).

Based on the above description, this study aims to examine the UN's role in regulating AI-based autonomous weapons in the Russia-Ukraine conflict and why the UN has not yet optimally enforced these regulations. This research aims to fill a gap in research specifically analyzing the UN's role in regulating AI-based autonomous weapons in the Russia-Ukraine war.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Pluralism Perspective

In this study, the researcher uses the pluralism perspective, which first emerged in international relations as a critique of realism theory. The

pluralism perspective views states as not the only important actors in international relations, as other actors, such as international organizations, multinational corporations, NGOs, and individuals, can influence global politics (Viotti & Kauppi, 1933).

According to Keohane and Nye (1977), in an era of global interdependence, power is no longer monopolized by military capabilities alone, but is also determined by economics, technology, and international institutions. Therefore, pluralism emphasizes the importance of international cooperation and the role of global institutions such as the United Nations in regulating modern world issues, including security and military technology (Keohane, 1977).

The pluralism perspective was chosen because it explains how cooperation between state and non-state actors, particularly the UN, plays a crucial role in formulating regulations regarding the use of AI-based autonomous weapons in the war between Russia and Ukraine. Resolving this conflict cannot be resolved solely by military force, but is driven by collaboration and shared rules at the global level.

Theory of the Function of International Organizations

An international organization is an organization formed and comprised of more than one country, voluntarily formed with the aim of creating world peace in international relations. According to Teuku May Rudy (2009), an international organization is defined as a pattern of cooperation that crosses national boundaries, based on a clear and comprehensive organizational structure, and carries out its functions continuously (Siregar, 2019).

In this study, the Unit of Analysis used is an international organization, namely the United Nations (UN). The UN plays a crucial role in facilitating cooperation between its member states and preventing escalating conflicts. The UN also serves as an ideal forum for conducting negotiations and reaching mutually beneficial decisions for all parties involved.

METHODOLOGY

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach. Descriptive qualitative research means that the data obtained will be collected directly in the form of a description or depiction of the object's overall condition and as it is, in the form of spoken or written words from those observed.

The type of data used is qualitative data obtained through library research. This research utilizes entirely secondary data sources derived from

various relevant library materials, including: 1) Official documents and UN reports such as resolutions, session minutes, meeting minutes, and publications; 2) Books and scientific journals discussing international law, global security, autonomous weapons, and the regulation of AI technology; 3) Academic articles, research reports, and publications from international institutions that address ethical and legal issues in the use of autonomous weapons.

The data analysis technique uses the Miles and Huberman (1994) model, namely: 1) Data Reduction–selection, concentration, simplification, and transformation of data; 2) Data Presentation–arranging data in narrative form, tables, or charts; and 3) Drawing Conclusions/Verification – drawing temporary conclusions and verifying them repeatedly to obtain valid final conclusions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The UN's Role in Regulating AI-Based Autonomous Weapons

In 1945, the United Nations (UN) was established as a collective response by the international community to the devastating effects of World War II. Based on the UN Charter, the UN exists as an institution capable of acting collectively to prevent armed conflict, provide assistance to parties involved in conflict situations, and achieve sustainable peace.

In the increasingly complex Russia-Ukraine conflict, the use of AI-based autonomous weapons has become increasingly widespread and sophisticated on the battlefield. This weapons technology has not only fundamentally changed the character and dynamics of warfare but also created new threats with the potential to significantly impact international security and the protection of civilians. In response to this reality, the UN has undertaken four important roles.

Diplomatic Forum

The UN provides an international forum for nations to engage in dialogue, facilitate peace negotiations, and exert diplomatic pressure on those violating international law. One of the main forums used is the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), adopted in 1980, an effort by the international community to modify advances in military technology in accordance with the principles of international humanitarian law.

Beyond the CCW, the issue of AI-based autonomous weapons is also discussed in the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (GGE), established by the CCW in 2017. This forum serves

as a platform to bridge the technical and diplomatic divides by inviting experts from different countries to discuss the implications of autonomous weapons systems from an international legal perspective. In various discussions, the GGE emphasizes the importance of meaningful human control in the operation of AI-based weapons systems (Daniele Amorso, 2020).

In the Russia-Ukraine war, the UN has taken initial steps by implementing a diplomatic approach since 2021. In an official UN report dated January 31, 2021, the UN, along with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), implemented a diplomatic approach by bringing together relevant parties in a forum to discuss improving relations between Russia and Ukraine (Risky Moehamad Adha, 2022).

International Law Enforcement

On January 25, 2022, Russia exercised its veto power, resulting in the UN Security Council resolution being declared invalid. Then, on March 4, 2022, the UN issued a resolution on the Russia-Ukraine conflict containing seven key points, including: (1) Condemning the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine; (2) Demanding that Russia evacuate all its military forces from Ukrainian territory; (3) Expressing concern over attacks on civilian targets; (4) Declaring non-recognition of territory seized by military force; to (7) Condemning Russia's decision to strengthen its nuclear forces (Krishna et al., 2023).

By bringing this issue to the UN General Assembly, the UN has alternative measures against Russia. General Assembly resolutions cannot be vetoed by Security Council members, but they do not authorize the UN to send peacekeeping troops into war zones. However, General Assembly resolutions can still indirectly influence Russia through bilateral or multilateral sanctions from other countries that use the resolution as a guide (Risky Moehamad Adha, 2022).

Shaping International Norms

One of the most significant resolutions is UN General Assembly Resolution ES-11/1, passed on March 2, 2022. This resolution condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine and reaffirmed the fundamental principles of international law, namely the prohibition of the use of force against territorial integrity. The majority support of participating states for this resolution

demonstrates a global consensus strengthening international norms regarding aggression (Union, 2022).

UN General Assembly Resolution ES-11/4 specifically addressed the issue of Russia's annexation of Ukraine and affirmed that any attempt to subjugate a government by military force violates international law. Many decisions taken by the UN General Assembly in the context of this conflict also demonstrate the norm cascade process, namely the transparent adoption and implementation of norms by the international community (Butchard, 2022).

Cooperation Facilitator

The UN promotes international cooperation through the establishment of various working groups and forums involving governments, academics, and other international organizations. In the context of AI-based autonomous weapons, international cooperation is crucial given the rapid development of this technology and the involvement of various global actors. Through the CCW forum, participating countries regularly meet to discuss various issues related to advances in weapons technology, including AI-based autonomous systems (Ferl, 2024).

The UN's role as a facilitator of international cooperation in the Russia-Ukraine conflict is also evident in its efforts to promote international coordination through various organizations in responding to the conflict. The UN aims to foster communication and cooperation to de-escalate the conflict and increase support for civilians affected by the war (Rights, 2022).

Factors Causing the UN's Suboptimal Role

Divergent Political Interests Among UN Member States

One of the main factors contributing to the inadequate UN regulation of AI-based autonomous weapons systems is the political and military differences among the countries involved. Many countries, including Austria, Brazil, and Chile, actively support the development of stricter international regulations. However, other countries, such as the United States, Russia, and China, which possess more advanced military technology, have a different approach and prefer flexible regulations rather than legally binding international treaties (Sayler, 2025).

These differing political and military interests negatively impact the international negotiation process taking place at the UN. When there are significant differences in interests among major powers, the process of establishing an international treaty becomes more difficult, resulting in several

years of discussions in international forums that have yet to produce a universal international legal instrument (Stauffer, 2022).

The Absence of Binding International Regulations

To date, the international community has yet to reach an agreement on the creation of an international treaty that explicitly regulates or limits the use of autonomous weapons in warfare. Although the CCW forum was convened to discuss the possibility of drafting regulations, these meetings have so far tended to produce general principles and recommendations rather than binding international legal regulations (Liu, 2025).

The complexity of artificial intelligence technology is one factor influencing the development of comprehensive international regulations. AI technology used in autonomous weapons systems continues to develop rapidly, making it difficult for international organizations to develop regulations that can accommodate the full potential of these technologies. The development of AI technology often outpaces the international diplomatic processes required to develop global agreements.

Limitations of the UN's Authority in Enforcing International Law

The UN does not have a firm stance on law enforcement among its member states. In practice, the implementation of various international norms and regulations remains dependent on the commitment and political will of individual states. The decision-making mechanism in the Security Council is weakened by the veto power held by the five permanent members: the United States, Russia, China, France, and the United Kingdom. The veto power allows a member state to oppose a Security Council resolution, even if the resolution has the support of a majority of other member states (Editors, 2025).

Large forums addressing the issue of AI-based autonomous weapons, such as the CCW, are more useful as platforms for international dialogue and diplomatic negotiations. Consequently, the outcomes of these forums often consist of recommendations or general principles that lack a strong legal basis. This situation demonstrates that the UN is more effective as a global platform for coordination and diplomacy than as a body with strong law enforcement capabilities.

Russia's Use of Veto Power Against UN Resolutions

In 2022, Russia vetoed a draft UN Security Council resolution condemning its military actions in Ukraine. As a permanent member of the

UN, Russia used its veto power to thwart the decision-making process, preventing the Security Council from passing a binding resolution (Kato, 2025). The primary impact of this veto power was the transfer of the Russia-Ukraine conflict from the Security Council to the UN General Assembly through the emergency "Uniting for Peace" mechanism. The General Assembly subsequently passed a resolution responding to Russia's actions, but this resolution does not have the same legal force as a Security Council resolution. Russia's use of veto power in the UN Security Council is a crucial factor hampering the organization's effectiveness in resolving the conflict between Russia and Ukraine (Peters, n.d.).

CONCLUSION

Based on research findings, the United Nations (UN) has fulfilled its role in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine as a diplomatic mediator, norm-setter, enforcer of international law, and facilitator of cooperation between states. This role has been realized through various concrete efforts, such as organizing international forums (CCW and GGE), issuing resolutions, and strengthening multilateral cooperation mechanisms aimed at maintaining stability and encouraging compliance with international humanitarian law.

However, this approach is not optimal because it remains normative and has not been implemented concretely. This is due to four factors: (1) Differing political interests among UN member states; (2) The absence of binding international regulations on AI-based autonomous weapons; (3) The UN's limited authority in enforcing international law; and (4) Russia's use of its veto power, which has structurally paralyzed the Security Council.

This study concludes that the UN's effectiveness in regulating advanced weaponry remains very limited. Institutional reforms are needed, particularly regarding restrictions on the use of veto power, as well as a stronger collective commitment from all member states. The UN needs to accelerate the development of binding international regulations on the use of AI-based autonomous weapons to fill the existing legal vacuum.

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