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Autonomous Weapon Systems, Human Dignity and International Law
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Propositions Relating to the Dissertation

Autonomous Weapon Systems, Human Dignity and International Law

By Daniel Saxon

1. The essential question about the design, development and use of autonomous weapon systems is whether there are certain responsibilities of human reasoning that humans should not delegate to machines.
2. As the speed of operations of autonomous weapon system increases, the use of these weapon systems will undermine the opportunities for, and the value of, human reason and thinking;
3. Human dignity is a treaty-based legal point-of-departure and a guiding concept that states must use to operationalise the norms and values that underlie their existence as independent societies.
4. When the use of autonomous weapon systems undermines the value of human reason and thinking (i.e. personal autonomy), the killing of human beings by autonomous weapon systems will constitute a violation of human dignity and, therefore, international law;
5. The unregulated use of autonomous weapon systems will undermine the function of law and the application of law;
6. In some circumstances, autonomous weapon systems may be used in compliance with international humanitarian law and/or international human rights law, as long as assessments involving complex and competing values are made by humans;

7. The design of autonomous weapon systems must have an interdependent, 'co-active' design in order to reduce the speed of autonomous weapon systems to a velocity where individuals can i) comply with law (in particular international humanitarian law and international human rights law) and (ii) ensure that human reasoning and judgment are available for cognitive functions better suited for humans than machines.
8. The use of co-active designs for lethal autonomous weapon systems permits teamwork between humans and autonomous technologies that can result in lower levels of criminality and more effective application of international criminal law.
9. Under existing law, states bear an international legal responsibility to ensure that autonomous weapon systems permit human-machine interdependence in circumstances that call for assessment and weighing of complex values.