CS 59866 – Senior Design Ethics Component

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Reaction Paper - Week 4

The letter, Autonomous Weapons: An Open Letter from AI & Robotics, Researchers from Future of Life talks about banning autonomous weapons because of the imminent danger they pose. The letter addresses the fact that autonomous weapons can allow dictators, terrorists and warlords to mass-produce significant military power to easily commit atrocities such as ethnic cleansing, assassination destabilizing nations, subduing population. Furthermore, the letter claims that while the supporters of the autonomous weapons argue that autonomous weapons can reduce human casualty, the risk involved is way too high when you factor in that this may start a global AI arms race. In my opinion, I agree with that AI arms need to be prohibited as soon as possible on a global scale because another arms race will lead to disastrous consequences. AI weapons are not like nuclear weapons where both sides fear mutual destruction because they do not require costly or hard-to-obtain materials and can be used in programmed to act covertly. Imagine a covert AI drone assassinating their political opponents, business opponents and the similar. In my mind, the possibility of autonomous weaponry is unfathomable and which gets even worse when you factor in that these machines can be easily mass produced. In addition, I believe AI weapons need to be banned before it’s too late and constantly searched for because topic has reached the ears of the public, which means that some government already has some form of AI weaponry. That’s why I believe in order to stop an arms race apocalypse there needs to be a global action being taken very quickly. Unfortunately, I also believe that global banning of autonomous weapons won’t be enough because there are some countries who have before and will go against such prohibitions. Therefore, while I think it’ll be impossible to stop autonomous weapons from being created, I hope that the ban will reduce the autonomous weapons from reaching their maximum potential.

The article, Pros and Cons of Autonomous Weapons by Amitai Etzioni and Oren Etzioni describes about positives and negatives of autonomous weapons. In the article it was stated the positives about autonomous weapons are that it is morally better to have robots fight instead of humans and the fact that a rover can cost about one fourth of the cost of deploying a human soldier. The article also stated that the negatives to autonomous which are public backlash, accountability of the autonomous weapon systems. In my opinion, the negatives outweigh the positives. I can see why a country’s military may push for autonomous weapons because of the significant reduction of costs but giving life-or-death decision making to nonhuman agents is too much of a risk. Personally, I believe that giving technology the decision to decide between life or death a step too far because it can lead to a situation where the blame of an accident is passed around up to a point where no responsibility is taken. If such a situation where to occur, it would lead to terrible repercussions because if the public start boycotting AI technology a very large number of companies that rely on AI in America would be in a bad position. This worst-case scenario is that the hate for autonomous weapons would spill over to AI tech and would lead to a economic depression because most companies in America use AI in order to run their businesses efficiently.