

BACKGROUND GUIDES



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Letter from the DIAS

Dear Delegates,

It is an incredible honor and pleasure to welcome you to the General Assembly First

Committee (GA1) of the Gems Wesgreen International School Model United Nations

(WESMUN). We are your Chairing Panel, Leen Elgharably, Khalid Abufaris, and [name], and we look forward to a session of diplomatic engagement, intellectual stimulation and collaborative problem solving.

GA1 is the First Main Committee of the United Nations for discussion and deliberation on disarmament and international security issues.

Therefore, we bear the responsibility of assessing the most treacherous threats to global stability. With this conference's theme being Geopolitics, Networking Control, and Transnational Threats, we discuss two sub-topics which matter to modern-day conflict and statecraft: the irresponsible creation of advanced weaponry and the indirect web of warfare and violence that exists between and among us all.

We understand that challenges exist. As a committee specializing in these topics, we must grapple with everything from advanced technology without borders to international collaboration in the deepest stretches of organized crime.

This is not merely a committee where you can come with your country's policies and fall back on them if you don't have something better. This is a committee where you need to be willing to engage, compromise and create. We encourage you to love the world of diplomacy, come in prepared, and above all else, fight to create solutions that enhance the international system of collective security for all!

Best wishes,

Leen Elgharably, Khalid Abufaris and Mrittika Saha

Introduction to committee

The First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly (GA1) is one of the United Nations General Assembly's six main committees and serves as the primary body for Disarmament and International Security.

As established in the UN Charter, GA1's function involves both consideration and recommendation of global concerns and peace threats that impact international society. The Mandate and Purpose of the Committee GA1's mandate is to give consideration to general principles that establish the cooperative measures available to protect international peace and security. In addition, GA1's mandate includes consideration of principles that govern disarmament and armament regulations.

Resolutions created and endorsed by GA1 are formally non-binding; however, they act as a norm-setter within the international system. More often than not, the discussions that transpire and subsequent adopted texts create a politically, ethically appealing standard used to turn treaties, conventions and arms control agreements into legally binding international law. GA1's purview covers traditional topics like conventional arms, nuclear disarmament, weapons of mass destruction and more.

However, it's important to note how GA1's mandate has expanded to include contemporary issues like science and technology in international security and scientific advancements in information and telecommunications. Thus, it works with the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) and Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament (CD).

Agenda 1: Regulating Cross-Border Transfers of Emerging Military Technologies.

Introduction to the Agenda

Historical Context:

This issue relates to the proliferation potential of a new class of weaponry, like AI-enabled systems, lethal autonomous weaponry, hypersonics, and advanced forms of cyberwarfare. These technologies are increasingly associated with dual-use technologies—developed in the commercial sector (e.g., advanced computing, data analytics) and able to be rapidly transitioned to military uses.

Current situation:

The biggest problem is that cross-border transfer is easier than ever before. Unlike large conventional platforms that must be transported intact, small parts and knowledge can serve as proliferation agents for this new class of weaponry. Furthermore, with the potential erosion of technological superiority, strategic stability is weakened and inadvertent conflict and crisis escalation becomes more likely.

Past UN actions:

Considerations for delegates include: What new export regimes/transparency measures are required for the trade of AI-enabled defense systems (and their data)? At what point can the international community intervene to regulate military applications of dual-use technologies—such as biotechnology and quantum science—before they become fully weaponized?

Key Terms

Regulating Cross-Border Transfers of EMTs Emerging Military Technologies (EMTs):

Emerging military technologies are a catch-all phrase for the most revolutionary and innovative future military technologies—mostly artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, automated systems, and advanced data processing. Emerging military technologies are those that change the way that armed conflict is fought, shaped the speed, scale, and nature of armed conflict so significantly that it returns to the root of all legal and ethical considerations. The term also implies that the speed of technological change is too fast for current legal and ethical systems to catch up.

• Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS):

Weapons systems which, following deployment, can independently navigate, use their own sensors and abilities to identify a target, and engage the target with force without any kind of human intervention, control, or approval in the absolute fewest amount of stages of targeting and engagement. There is considerable international discourse to define this system and come to a common understanding that aims at prohibition.

• Meaningful Human Control (MHC):

An ethical/ legal metric acknowledged through the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) which promotes significant human involvement who has sufficient authority and an ability to intervene to stop the use of force relative to the determination of a target and determination of lethal force for application. One major issue creating discontent is what degree of meaningful is established (i.e., human-in-the-loop vs. human-on-the-loop).

• Dual-Use Goods and Technologies:

Goods, software or special designed technical data which can be utilized for dual non-military (civil/commercial) or military purposes. The dual-use nature represents the most significant challenge to various conventional export control regimes as regulations of such stymies legitimate global trade and industrial/scientific exchange efforts.

• Intangible Technology Transfer (ITT):

An alteration of governed technological information, designs, IP, or provision of unique technical training without physical means. These include te digital (files, cloud capabilities), spoken and training-course based transfers which, arguably, act as a mitigation of physical means of border security and complicate non-proliferation efforts.

Key Issues

The Principle of Meaningful Human Control (MHC) vs. Strategic Necessity

The first issue concerns the distinction both legally and ethically between LAWS development and LAWS deployment. On the one hand, it provides for ethically and morally necessary accountability; on the other, operational demands of a technology age warfare, where speed is of the essence. US, China and Russia as the state leaders in LAWS development tout autonomy as a strategic necessity during speed engagement, cyber protections and decreased human casualty. They support a Human-on-the-Loop regulatory approach which provides for mere monitoring and non-approval to all kill requests. Majority states and humanitarian organizations, however, support a Human-in-the-Loop model or a ban as they believe MHC is crucial to IHL principles basically due to the Principle of Distinction and Proportionality. Ultimately, if it cannot be established now what level of control will be instituted, algorithms will have the final say on life and death, creating an Accountability Gap in International Criminal Law where war crimes attributable to autonomous systems will be incapable of prosecution thus impermissibility will become normalized.

Regulatory Gap: Controlling Intangible Transfers of Dual-Use EMTs

This issue relates to inadequacies of conventional arms control via digital technologies, with an emphasis on the cross-border transfer facet of Topic A. Weapons of today are less and less the physical object and more and more the code, data and specialized knowledge. The existing international control regimes (the Wassenaar Arrangement, etc.) relate to the regulation of physical weapons and Dual-Use Goods. However, the expedited proliferation of EMTs is predicated on Intangible Technology Transfer (ITT)—the invisible transfer of coding, blueprints and training through digital means. Liberal economic powers do not want to see regulated Dual-Use Goods (AI chips/software) as this regulates international trade but also scientific and academic collaboration. Thus, the problem arises that without a universally applicable/enforceable regime for monitoring and attributing ITT, sophisticated EMT capabilities can be immediately and almost imperceptibly transferred to Proxies and non-state actors who are still exempt from all forms of physical weapons embargoes while simultaneously expediting the Technological growth of world proxy warfare.

Major Parties

United States:

The US is the definitive global power, defining policy across both agendas. The US being the major creator of cutting-edge Emerging Military Technologies (EMTs), in general, is not in favor of any international legislation which may limit her development of autonomous systems. Instead, she prefers setting a flexible Human-on-the-Loop standard. Moreover, the US is the biggest global provider of Foreign Military Support (FMS), and usually, through its wide network of bilateral agreements and aid, it helps partners and controls the development of proxy conflicts worldwide. Consequently, its export policies are at the center of the debate about the accountability issue.

China:

China's role is characterized by the pursuit of technological equivalence and the protection of national sovereignty. The country is quickly catching up with the US in terms of technological innovations in EMTs and sees their progress as vital to national security. China strongly opposes any external restrictions on the export of Dual-Use Goods and Intangible Technology Transfer (ITT) as she sees them as attempts to impede her economic and military rise. The policy of non-interference allows her to be the strongest advocate of the absolute sovereignty principle, which can be used by her diplomatically to protect her strategic partners (Principal Actors) from the international community.

Russia:

Russia is a prominently featured player in both topics and uses EMTs and FMS to extend its influence. Besides being a major contributor to the development of its own EMTs, Russia is a skillful and creative user of asymmetric tactics. On the tactical front, Russia is a frequent Principal Actor that employs Proxies and delivers ample FMS (including weapons and technical assistance) to various localities. Usually, its diplomatic position is opposite to the accountability measures in the UN Security Council, where it employs its veto power to safeguard its freedom to use both advanced technology and Proxies with Plausible Deniability.

Major Parties

Germany:

Germany epitomizes the significant conflict between moral policy and economic factors. Being a major global arms exporter and a key contributor to European defense is, in essence, directly linked to the supply side of Foreign Military Support. At the same time, German political policy is frequently one of the strongest internal forces within the EU advocating for strict arms export policies grounded on human rights criteria and a well-developed preference for Human-in-the-Loop systems. Hence, her voting record on binding EMT regulation is of utmost importance.

Turkey:

Thanks to quick developments in home-grown defense technology, Turkey has managed to position itself as a highly influential regional Principal Actor. As the primary manufacturer and seller of sophisticated armed drone EMTs, it employs this technology as a foreign policy instrument that is cheap, yet yields high results. What gives her this ability is that she can function as an influential external force in local proxy wars (e.g., Libya, Syria) where she can exert control and sway the war's outcome without exposing large-scale conventional forces.

India:

India is one of the major buyers and importers of both traditional and cutting-edge defense technology. As a result, it becomes very sensitive to the dangers of EMT proliferation and to the possibility of destabilization due to proxy wars on its borders. As the prominent leader of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), India's stance is characterized by the requirement of strategic independence – it seeks the technology necessary for self-defense but at the sametime it is a strong advocate of respect for national sovereignty against external Principal Actors and unregulated Foreign Military Support.

Previous attempts to resolve the issue

Arms Trade Treaty – 2014

The treaty controls the sale of everyday weapons. Its goal is to stop shipments that could feed an existing war. The text however, never spells out how to treat AI weapons, cyber attacks or fully autonomous systems.

Wassenaar Arrangement – 1996:

The agreement represents a compromise among different countries, where the parties involved establish specific limits on the export of armaments and technologies that serve both civilian plus military purposes. It partially addresses future technology, but because the arrangement is non binding, signatories face no obligation to comply.

Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) – 1987:

The regime primarily aims to prevent the spread of technologies related to missiles and drones that deliver destructive warheads. It does not cover most emerging technologies, like hypersonic systems or AI-powered weapons.

UN GGE on Lethal Autonomous Weapons (LAWS):

Since 2014, the UN has held repeated meetings about weapons that act without human control. The debates have let different parties understand the topic better – yet no binding treaty or global rule has appeared.

National Export Laws & Bilateral Agreements : Every state runs its own system to check what sensitive technology leaves its borders. A few states also sign separate deals with partners. Because each national rule set differs, the world lacks one consistent export standard. Taken together earlier efforts show that work occurred, but holes remain – fast moving technologies keep widening them. At present no firm international law controls the transfer of cutting edge military hardware.

Questions a Resolution Must Answer:

1.What exactly are “new military technologies”?

- Which specific items fall under this label? Do weapons that rely on artificial intelligence, cyber war tools and high-performance drones qualify?
- Must the resolution also cover dual use items – hardware or software that serves civilian needs yet also has military value?

2. What rules are needed?

- How will the many forms of transfer be watched?
- Will states report each transfer to a single global register?
- How will states follow the rules without giving up control over matters they deem central to national sovereignty?

3. How will the world ensure that the rules are obeyed?

- What joint actions will states take to stop the secret sale of arms?
- Must the UN watch over the process?
- What response will follow if a state breaks the rules?

4. How will states protect security while they continue to innovate?

- How will they push science and technology forward and still shield the world from harm?
- Must they protect the peaceful uses of every technology?

5. How will developing countries receive support?

- Which forms of help – like funding, expert staff or hands on workshops – exist so that those states can track and control transfers of weapons technology?
- Does the United Nations have the duty to set up such a programme?

6. Which ethical questions must be addressed?

- How will the planned measure stop human rights abuse and ensure respect for humanitarian law?
- Should limits be set on emerging technologies like autonomous weapons, and, if so, what limits?

7. Which actions will prepare the world for new technologies?

- Should the resolution include a clause that requires the rules to be reviewed and, if necessary, revised at fixed intervals?
- Because technology evolves without pause, how will the system stay effective?

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Agenda 2: Addressing the Geopolitical Risks of Proxy Conflicts and Foreign Military Support

Introduction to the Agenda

Historical context:

Proxy conflicts, armed conflicts in which a third-party power exerts indirect influence which are over the strategic outcome through foreign-sponsored local belligerents, are a longstanding feature of international geopolitics—but increasingly now in tangentially connected and very complicated formats.

Current situation and why this is a geopolitical risk:

Proxy conflicts rarely respect borders; instead, they internationalize and become more intense as foreign sponsors provide new and greater means of warfare. Foreign military assistance, intelligence gathering and dissemination, arms supply chains create the dilution of command and control and accountability, making it all but impossible to understand which violator of international law is responsible for which acts. Non-state actors working on behalf of states increasingly perform proxy warfare on cyberspace turf—even as these entities work to avoid specific legally required thresholds that make response action justified or not.

Past and current UN action:

The committee must consider how international legal frameworks, especially concerning state accountability for proxy non-state armed groups and foreign military assistance, can be better defined as norms to mitigate transnational threats from foreign involvement. Instead, the international security playing field would be much more predictable through more defined expectations.

Key Terms

Proxy Conflicts (or Proxy War): A violent conflict in which one or several foreign nations or large political or economic entities, called Principal Actors, strategically use, equip and support local armed organizations or forces (the Proxies) that do the fighting on their behalf. In this manner, the Principal Actor continues to attempt to achieve his geopolitical policy aim with reduced risk and less direct involvement and simultaneously minimizes the costs.

- **Principal Actor:** The foreign country or entity, that is politically, economically and/or militarily the primary supporter and supplier of the allied force which thus can operate effectively. The greatest challenge to international accountability is establishing a *prima facie* case showing the legal connection between the wrongdoings of the proxy forces and the activity of the Principal Actor.
- **Foreign Military Support (FMS):** Any of the various forms of external support to one side or the other in a conflict that facilitates or extends warfare. FMS (Foreign Military Sales) is a broad term applying to an array of steps and actions that are/may be taken by the supporting nation versus those receiving support, including overt or covert arms sales, donations of weaponry and munitions, specialized military training, financial support, organization of transportation and communication assistance, intelligence support, etc. One of the key results of such support is the complicating of peacebuilding and peacemaking/peacekeeping opportunities.
- **Plausible Deniability:** A means by which the Principal Actor is shielded from internationalized criticism of ulcerative participation. To create this defensiveness, the Principal Actor structures levels of command and types of support (i.e. through covert means or third parties) so that he can claim no knowledge of the events therefore plausible denial not only of awareness but responsibility and thus political distance from legal accountability.
- **Internationalized Non-International Armed Conflict (INIAC):** a legal category under the IHL regime based on the causal realities of internal conflict (e.g., civil wars) transformed by significant, prolonged, and intentional foreign involvement from a foreign state or states. Such internationalization renders applicable certain IHL regulations relating to intervention and occupation
- **Asymmetric Warfare:** A form (or mode) of conflict where the participants have very dissimilar armed forces, resources, or methods of operation. Generally, this means that the Proxies less technologically advanced and militarily positioned could defeat the central or other major power more technologically advanced through low-cost weaponry and the Principal Actor's facilitation of easily acquired, ubiquitous weapons.

Key Issues

Cutting Through Plausible Deniability and Determining State Attribution in Proxy Conflicts;

This is the central political concern of Topic B (Proxy Conflicts). It relates to the potential by which the international community could render powerful external states (Principal Actors) legally and diplomatically accountable for the actions taken by their Proxies. The Principal Actors intentionally leverage Plausible Deniability, hence they channel Foreign Military Support (FMS) through intermediaries, depend on clandestine entities (i.e., PMCs), or engage in non-attributed cyber offenses to avoid culpability in the UN Security Council (UNSC). Supporters of such a strategy suggest it avoids sanctions stemming from Proxy violations of sovereignty or IHL. States at the receiving end of or impacted by Proxy warfare require a different legal regime that facilitates determinations sanctioning the Principal Actor based on the Proxy's actions.

Sovereignty vs. Humanitarian Necessity: The Role of External FMS;

This issue concerns two fundamental principles of the UN Charter that conflict with each other: absolute state sovereignty against collective responsibility to uphold international peace and avoid humanitarian disasters. Principal Actors often justify Foreign Military Support (FMS) as an issue of self-defense or compliance with bilateral treaties. However, when the intent of support is to extend a conflict, it blatantly disregards victim state sovereignty and regional destabilization. But when is that line? What is the legal and political threshold? When does provision of FMS or an actual Proxy's presence become an Internally Politicized Non-International Armed Conflict (INIAC) that warrants multinational action and accountability? Establishing a "materiality threshold" for FMS will be extremely difficult for all stakeholders to agree upon. If the materiality threshold is too low, it will almost guarantee foreign interference; however, if it is too high, it will allow conflicts to slowly brew over time resulting in vast human devastation but at the same time, respecting sovereignty.

Major Parties

Iran:

Iran is one of the best illustrations of how technology can intensify proxy wars and pose a challenge to global security. Under the weight of harsh sanctions, Iran has managed to put together a strong locally-made drone and missile program (EMTs). More importantly, Iran plays the role of a clever Principal Actor in this game by providing, equipping, and sometimes co-manufacturing, these cheap autonomous weapons with its Proxies (e.g., in Yemen, Lebanon). In that way, it enables them to perform asymmetric warfare operations and at the same time threaten the global choke points with Plausible Deniability.

Brazil:

Brazil represents a major voice from the Global South that tries to balance its stance as an exporter of Small Arms and Light Weapons (thus being extremely important for the control of FMS flow) and its rich diplomatic past. As a staunch advocate of multilateralism and transparency in the arms trade (having ratified the Arms Trade Treaty – ATT), Brazil has not only taken the initiative in UN discussions on LAWS but also been at the forefront of implementing the treaty. Its policy is oriented towards peace and the proper measures to ensure that technology is not misused. At the same time, it provides a shield for the Global South against the dual threat of irresponsible technology proliferation and the illegal trade that militates for proxy conflicts.

Non-Aligned Movement (NAM):

The Non-Aligned Movement represents the collective voice of the large majority of member states. This block is the most probable victims of the moral and humanitarian consequences resulting from both agendas since they are the main venues for proxy conflicts and the most targeted by the proliferation of low-cost, high-tech weapons. Together, the NAM members call for a firmly binding, law-based, and humanitarian-focused solution that gives primary importance to Meaningful Human Control and imposes strict regulations to hold Principal Actors accountable for intervention.

UN Security Council P5 (Other):

The UN Security Council P5 (excluding individually listed nations) is the institutional choke point for both crises. According to the law, any resolution to establish a binding treaty on the EMT cross-border transfer should be enacted by the UNSC. Most importantly, the main obstacle to holding Principal Actors responsible for the proxy conflicts in which they are involved is the veto power which each of the P5 nations has. Everything depends on the capability of this committee to circumvent or influence the usually deep-seated geopolitical divisions within the Council if its proposed solutions are to be effective.

Previous attempts to resolve the issue

1. Legal Rules and Treaties

States have signed treaties that set limits on sending weapons abroad. The Arms Trade Treaty asks every signatory to publish its arms transfers so that the weapons do not slip to rebel forces or worsen a war. Few states have joined but also the treaty lacks a binding court – the rules have little force.

International humanitarian law and the United Nations Charter both state that no country should meddle in the affairs of another, that every state keeps its own authority and that disputes must be settled without force. Those rules rest on solid legal ground – yet outside powers often break them when proxy wars serve their own strategic goals

2. United Nations Security Council Actions

The Security Council has adopted many resolutions that deal with wars where outside forces take part. It bans weapons shipments, orders ceasefires plus urges rival sides to talk. It also names specific people or groups who send weapons and places penalties on them.

Disagreement among the five permanent members has again but also again blocked firm action and has weakened the effect of those steps.

3. Peacekeeping and Political Missions

The United Nations sends peacekeeping forces and special political missions to areas shaken by wars in which outside powers back rival sides. The teams watch for truce violations, shield civilians from attack plus help the local sides work toward a settlement. Violence drops in some places after the blue helmets arrive – yet the operation succeeds only when the governments involved give their consent and when the mission receives enough money, troops but also equipment.

4. Regional and Multilateral Efforts

The African Union, the Arab League, the European Union and the Organization for Security

besides Co-operation in Europe each try to mediate and to settle conflicts on their respective continents. They know the local facts better than distant capitals, but splits among their own members, weak legal authority as well as tight budgets limit what they achieve.

Diplomatic and Preventive Measures

States hold talks, exchange guarantees and act before fights widen in order to keep proxy wars from heating up. Such steps lower the level of violence for a short time – yet the calm lasts only while major powers keep working together.

Questions a Resolution Must Answer:

- How do states act together to stop another state from hiring proxies - yet still respect each side's right to govern itself and to remain secure?
- Which early diplomatic tools need stronger support to keep a small local clash from turning into a proxy war?
- How do states set binding limits on outside military help - like arms sales training missions and similar acts - so that the help does not widen a war?
- Which clear rules draw the line between security help that is acceptable but also help that keeps a proxy war alive?
- Which steps allow the public to see who sends weapons and who sends troops?
- Who faces legal penalties when proxy forces break international law?
- Which tasks should the United Nations carry out when it watches, mediates or settles proxy wars?
- How should regional groups back the United Nations when they try to stop or end fights?
- How can military help to armed groups that do not belong to any state stay within bounds without blocking peace talks or relief work?
- How can fights where major powers use other parties keep from turning into open clashes between those powers?
- How can rebuilding and peace work after conflict cut reliance on foreign forces over the long run?

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