

Forum: GA3: Social, Humanitarian & Cultural Issues

Issue #G3-02: The Regulation of Autonomous Technologies

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Introduction

Throughout history, humanity has always sought ways of making tasks easier and faster. This aim for automatization and the curiosity of how far human inventions can go has undoubtedly always led to the development of societies.

Moreover, it is universally acknowledged that the knowledge of the human being has been growing exponentially in the past years. The improvements seen in technology in the later years are considerably bigger than any others before, and as a consequence societies were obligated to modify their structure in order to receive and adapt to the use of new technologies. This makes scientists think that if we continue to grow this way, in the following years more tasks will be replaced by non-sentient machines.

New technologies have the aim of either innovating and improving access to services or making tasks easier, faster and better. Nowadays, many technologies are responsible for the incredible growth in production and wellbeing.

Nevertheless, the advent of new technologies always leads to the questioning of the legal framework behind them. Nowadays, regulations involving technologies such as artificial intelligence, social media sites, and autonomous technologies, are extremely vague and concern most governments. The lack of a legal framework for the use of these inventions is arousing tensions between big companies, users, and governments. So, the United Nations' advice regarding regulating the emergence of new technologies is mandatory.

Autonomous technologies can be defined as any technology that can operate without human stimulus. They can do the jobs and tasks humans do and can also take decisions regarding these based on collected data. As they emerge and are developed, used, and employed,

governments need to ensure that everything related to their use is aligned with the moral and ethical principles of their nation and is under the law. Undoubtedly, it is challenging to draw the line between what is right and what is not regarding the use and development of these technologies.

Not only can these technologies be unethical and immoral but they are also risking the jobs and the security of thousands of millions. Also, many autonomous devices can currently make decisions about many topics without needing a human stimulus, an issue that can be taken as a severe risk due to the fact that non-human devices do not have the possibility of ensuring critical thinking while making their decisions.

Definition of key terms

Autonomous Technology

Autonomous technology can be defined as any kind of technology that is able to perform tasks and make decisions without any human stimulus and completely by themselves. Autonomous technology is also able to collect data from the environment they are located in and based on this knowledge they can predict possible future situations and act independently.

Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence is defined by Google as *a set of technologies that enable computers to perform a variety of advanced functions, including the ability to see¹, understand and translate spoken and written language, analyze data, make recommendations and more*. So, artificial intelligence is basically any technology that is able to do things without being told to by a human.

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is a key component when analyzing what is wrong and what is right. It is undoubtedly one of the crucial pillars of law. The Oxford Dictionary defines it as *the objective analysis and evaluation of an issue in order to form a judgment*. It is crucial to understand the concept and the importance of it while establishing legal regulations.

¹ See refers to the ability of processing images and recognizing what is in the image. A feature live creatures have.

Automation

Automation is when technology is used to carry out tasks without manually handling them, and leads to faster and better results. Autonomous technologies are in charge of the automation of many tasks and as a result, some businesses are increasing their profits and millions of jobs are being lost.

Background information

In history, every time something was invented, from new architectural techniques to books, the innovation brought risks and inconveniences. This has always led to the necessity of creating a legal framework in order to ensure that the population is protected. As an example, when the first cars were invented and people started using them, accidents and dangerous situations began to appear. As a consequence, governments started conceiving the idea that the law needed to regulate the use of cars. The most important decision they took was to make the owner, or sometimes the driver, responsible for the damage a car may cause. After that, regulations regarding speed limits, lights, seatbelts, and more were developed. This example is perfect to understand the importance of preventing risks from happening. Governments need to forestall the possible inconveniences that technological developments may generate, and applicable regulations as soon as possible.

Autonomous technologies (AT) are a rather new kind of technology. They are not very accessible and they are rather rare and most people do not know what they are. But, the forecast is that these technologies will continue to improve and are going to be more and more present both in quotidian life and in the business world. Following this idea, the United Nations as a major intergovernmental organization must be able to ensure that with the advance of AT, governments are prepared to act to prevent inconveniences related to AT to happen. To do so, it is important that this committee debate how Member States shall act.

Past Action

As this issue concerns technologies that are being developed and not yet accessible to most people, no fundamental legal regulations have been created nor applied in any country.

Also, the United Nations has not discussed this issue thoroughly and has not passed any resolution on this issue. Nevertheless, UN advice has been given to nations as a warning as to what autonomous technologies could and may lead to.

Possible Solutions

As this issue is trying to prevent future conflicts regarding the usage of autonomous intelligence and there are no clear issues going on right now, possible solutions to this issue are broad and plenty.

Firstly, it is mandatory to understand the depth of the issue and how the necessity for applying a legal framework to these new technologies must be a top priority. Following this idea, many possible solutions may appear while also taking into consideration the involvement your country has on this issue and the possible repercussions the solutions you submit might have on your country.

It is crucial to find a responsible person for autonomous technologies actions and this shall be the beginning of the regulations the UN suggests applying. Furthermore, regulations should bear in mind the improvements these technologies bring society and how to tackle this issue while ensuring these improvements continue to grow.

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