

14:45–15:45 **S1002, S Building**

Lethal Autonomous Weapons and the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence

Dante Augusto Couto Barone



HALMSTAD
UNIVERSITY



Halmstad university, September 22–24, 2026

To refresh the memory...

What are **Lethal Autonomous Weapons**?

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Examples: AI-powered drones, autonomous gun turrets, patrol robots.



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How is the world responding to these challenges?

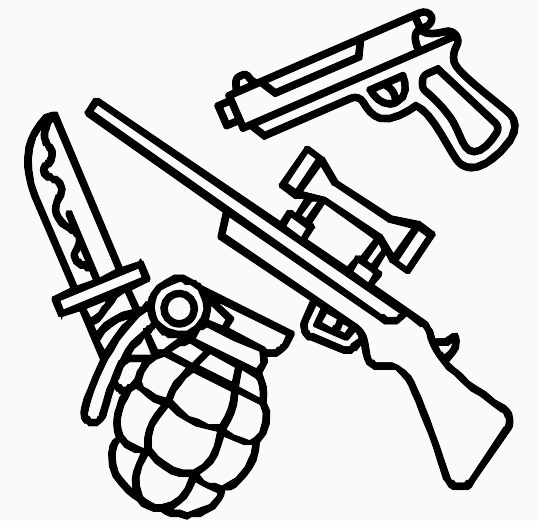


Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons

(CCW)

The main forum for international debates on the use of weapons that, even if "conventional," cause unnecessary suffering to soldiers or indiscriminately affect civilians.

Responsible organization: **United Nations (UN)**



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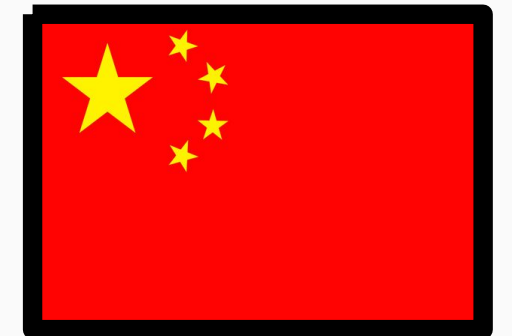
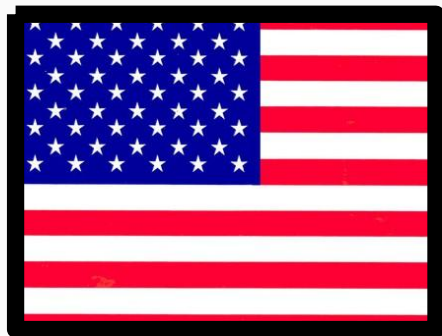
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Operation Spiderweb

Ukraine's Deep-Strike Drone Offensive

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Ukraine's Deep-Strike Drone Offensive



- Date: June 1, 2025
- Targets: Five Russian long-range aviation airbases deep in Russia
- Assets Used: 117 FPV drones launched from inside Russia
- Outcome: 20 aircraft hit (≈ 10 destroyed); up to 41 damaged (disrupting Russia's bomber fleet)

Recent example of **AI usage in warfare**

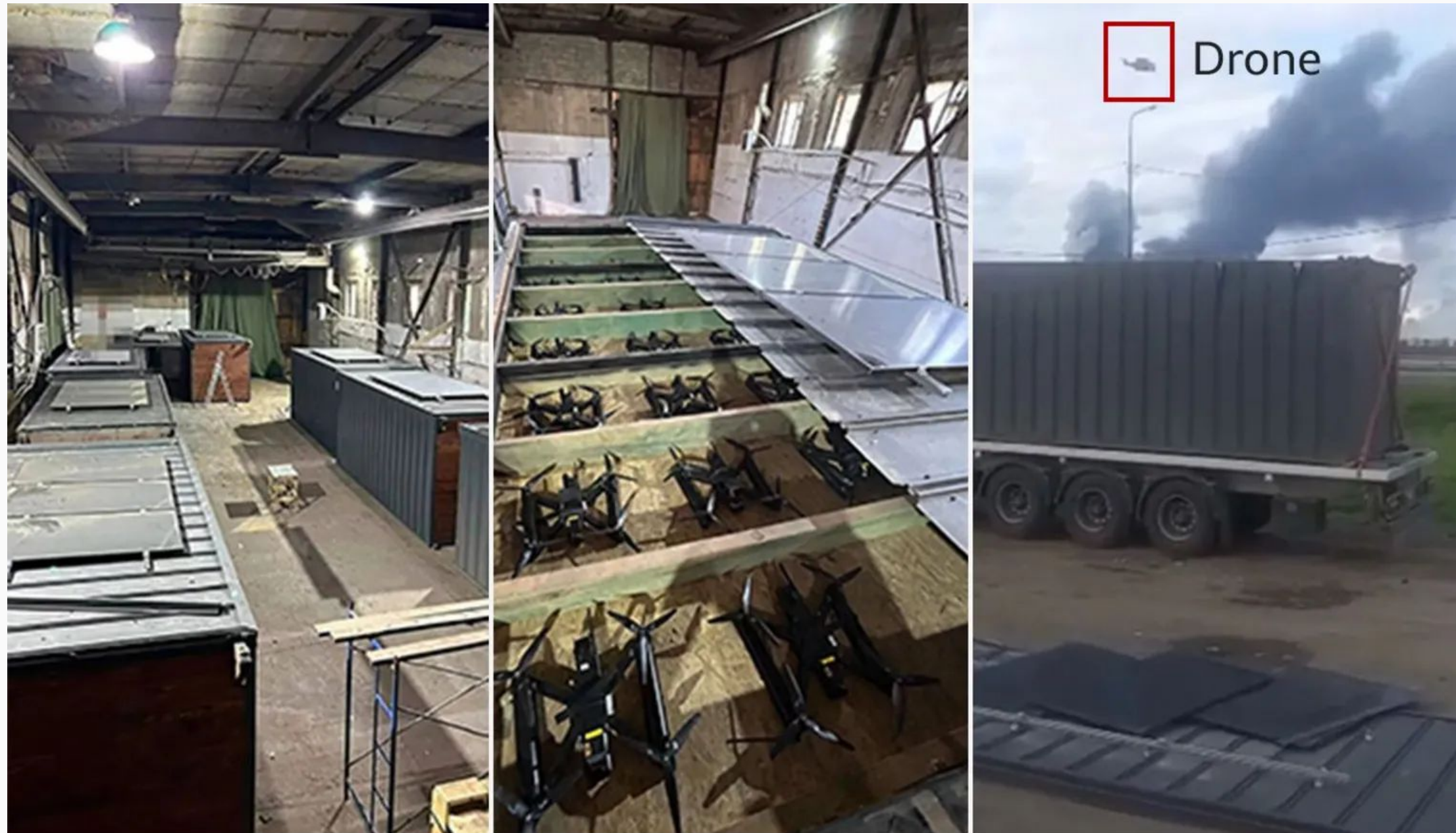
Operation Spiderweb

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- Tactical Innovation:
Covert launch methods + drone swarm tactics
= operational surprise
- Warfare Trend: Demonstrates evolution of drone warfare:
from **reconnaissance** to **strategic, high-value targeting**

Operation Spiderweb Ukraine's Deep-Strike Drone Offensive



1. Specially-designed wooden cabins were smuggled into Russia

2. Drones were then hidden below detachable roofs

3. Cabins were driven to targets where the drones were launched

Source: SBU, Telegram

BBC

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- Yet, still human-controlled, but with AI support (autopilot, navigation, anti-jamming)
 - No fully autonomous “killer drones” used

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 - No fully autonomous “killer drones” used
- Shows how **AI** already **boosts effectiveness** of drone warfare, **even without replacing human decision-making**

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A Drone Chooses Its Own Target

Zaporizhzhia, 6 July 2026

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- It missed the tanks, struck a wall and detonated near people sheltering below: **three civilians killed** (Tetiana Bubynets, 19; Oleksiy Svirin, 41; Roman Karpiy, 48).

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Source: New York Times, Aug. 2026.

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- **First documented case** in the war of civilian deaths from a fully autonomous targeting system (CSIS). Source: New York Times, Aug. 2026.
- Contrast with Spiderweb: there AI only **assisted** a human decision; here the **machine made the targeting call**, and could not tell a fuel tank from a building facade.

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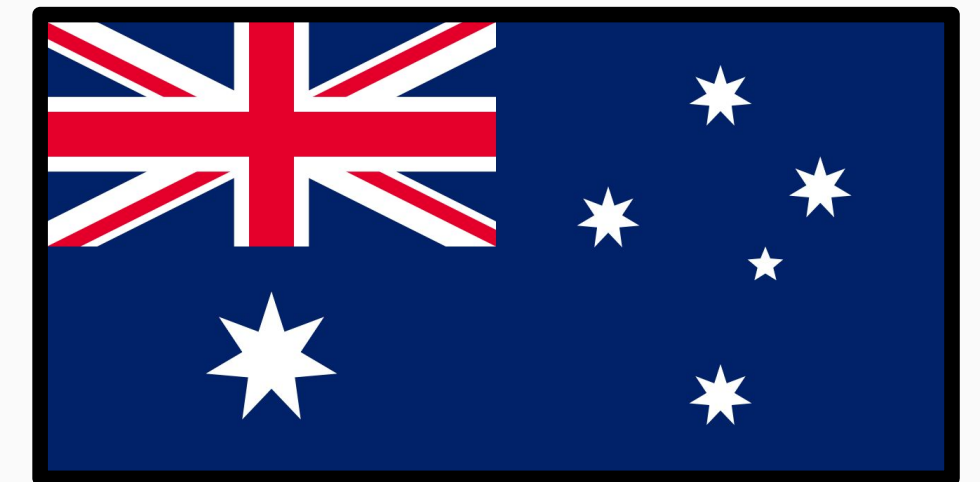
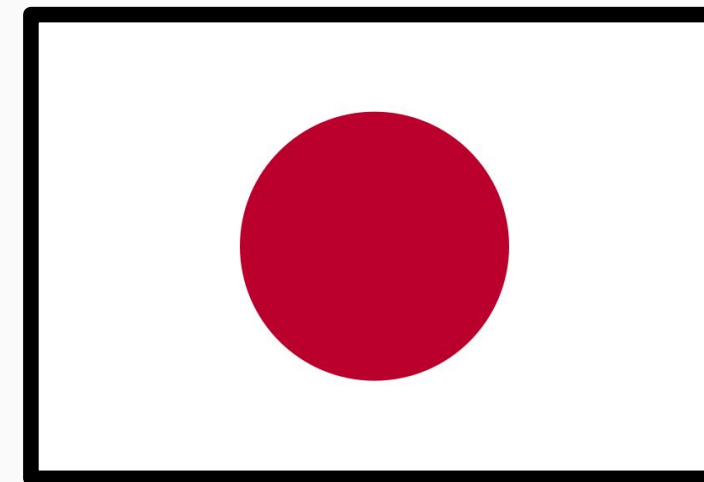
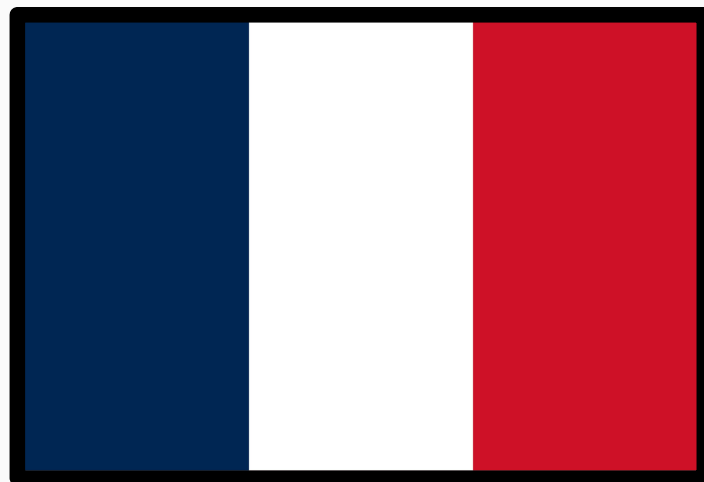
Meaningful Human Control!

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Examples: France, Germany, Japan and Australia.



UNGA Resolution 79/239 (Dec. 2024)

Artificial Intelligence in the Military Domain



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- Encourages:
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- Bridges Divides: Calls for support to developing countries via cooperation, assistance, and sharing of good practices.



Artificial Intelligence in the Military Domain

- Requests:
 - UN Secretary-General to collect Member State views (esp. beyond lethal autonomous weapons) and report at the 80th GA session (Tuesday, 9 September 2025)
 - Inclusion of stakeholder perspectives (ICRC [Red Cross], scientific community, industry, NGOs).



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- Next Steps: Item to remain on the 80th GA agenda under "General and complete disarmament."



Regulatory Proposals and Models under Discussion

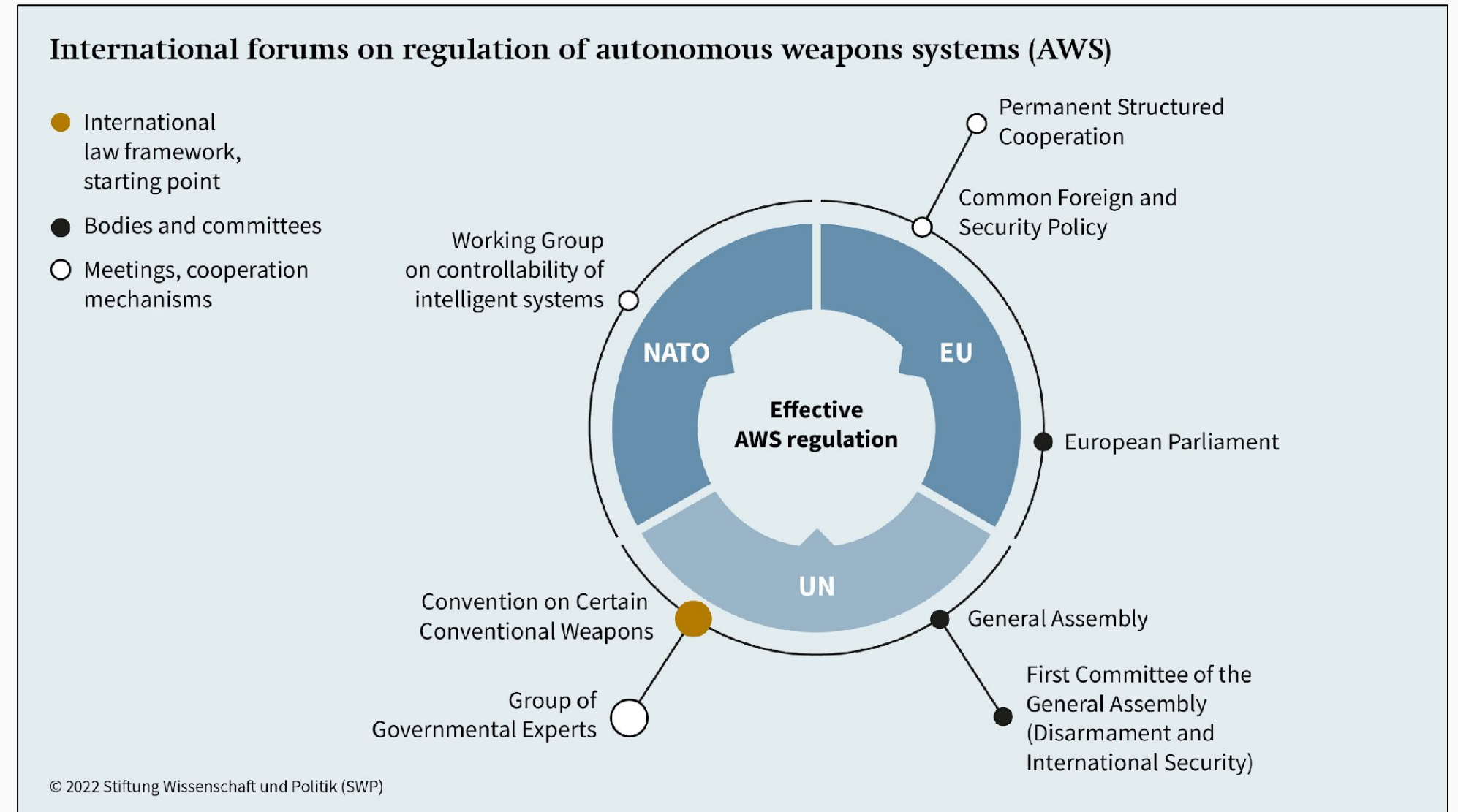
Regulatory Proposals and Models under Discussion

- Meaningful Human Control
- Preventative moratorium
- Algorithmic auditing and transparency
- Dualistic approach

European AI Act

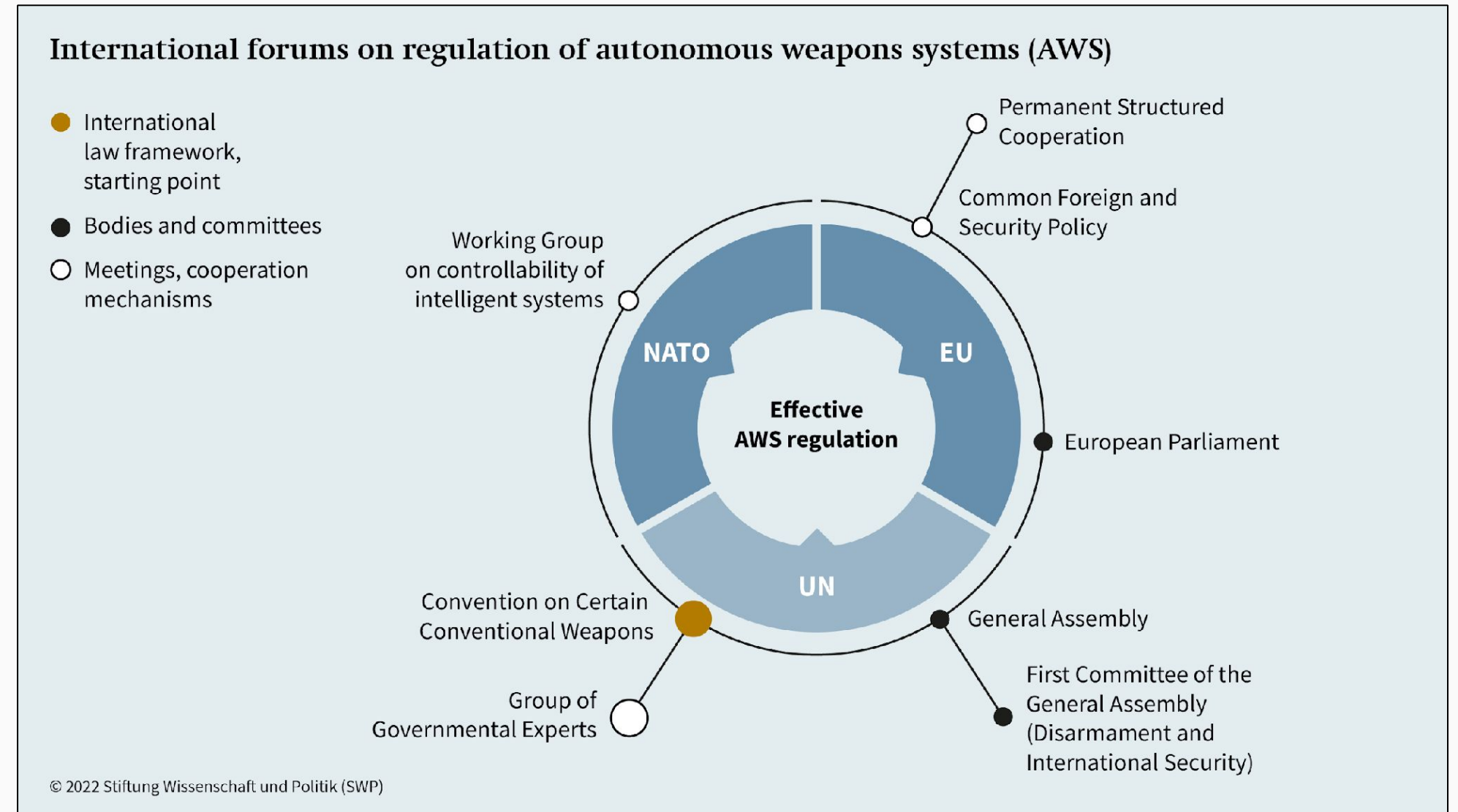
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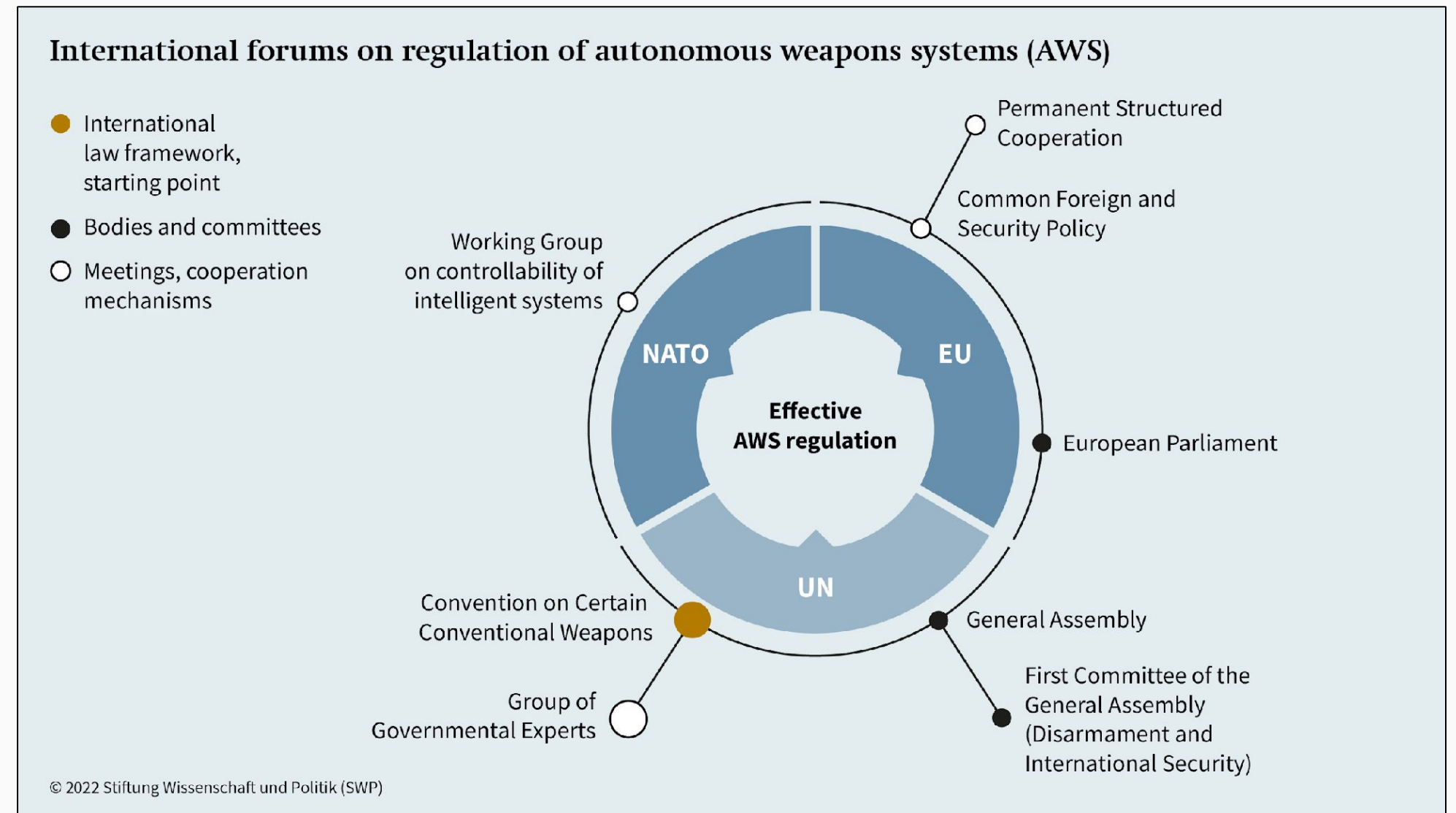
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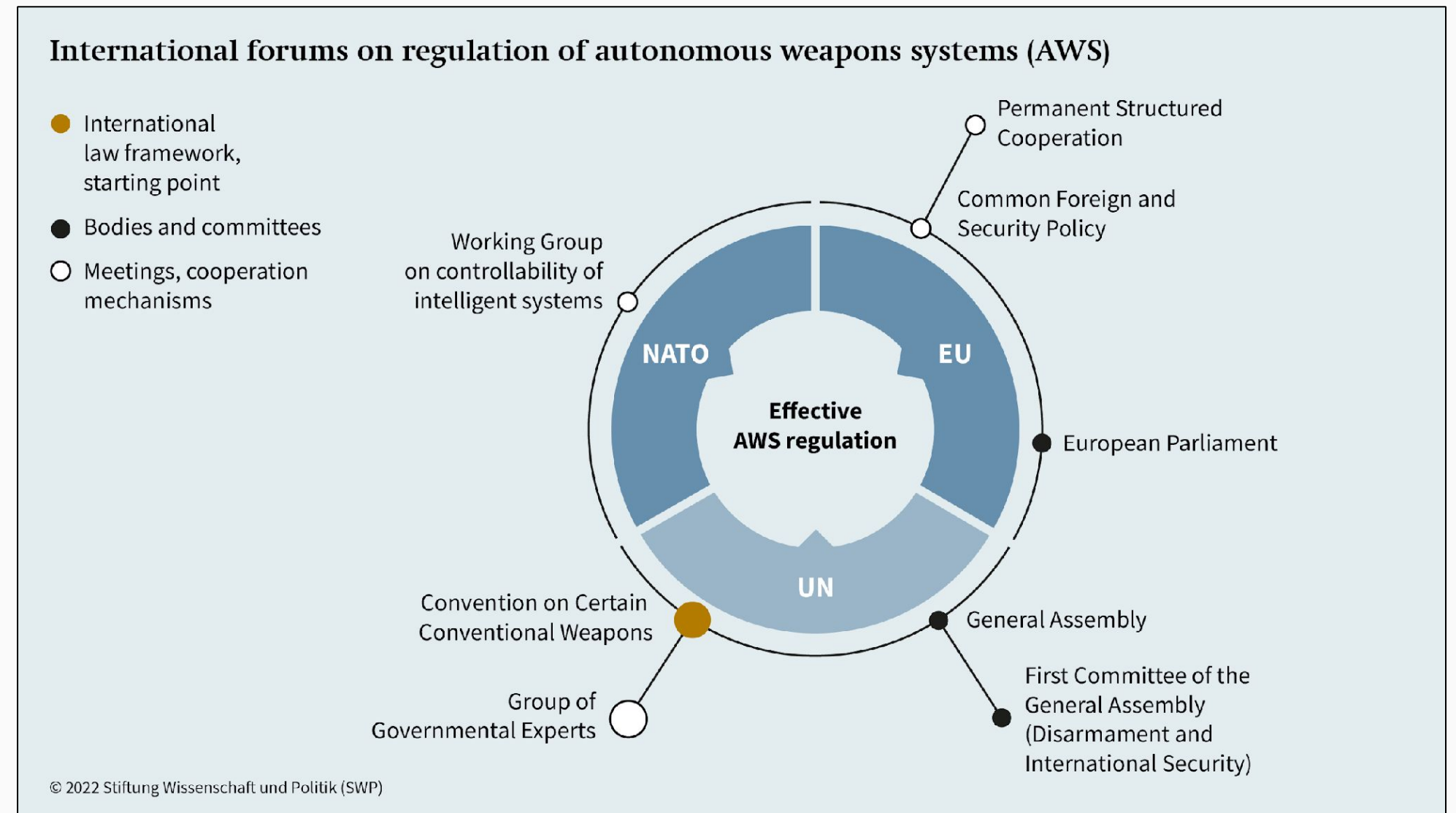
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- The absence of an **explicit prohibition within the AI Act itself** highlights lawmakers' caution, leaving concerns about potential regulatory gaps regarding military AI autonomy.



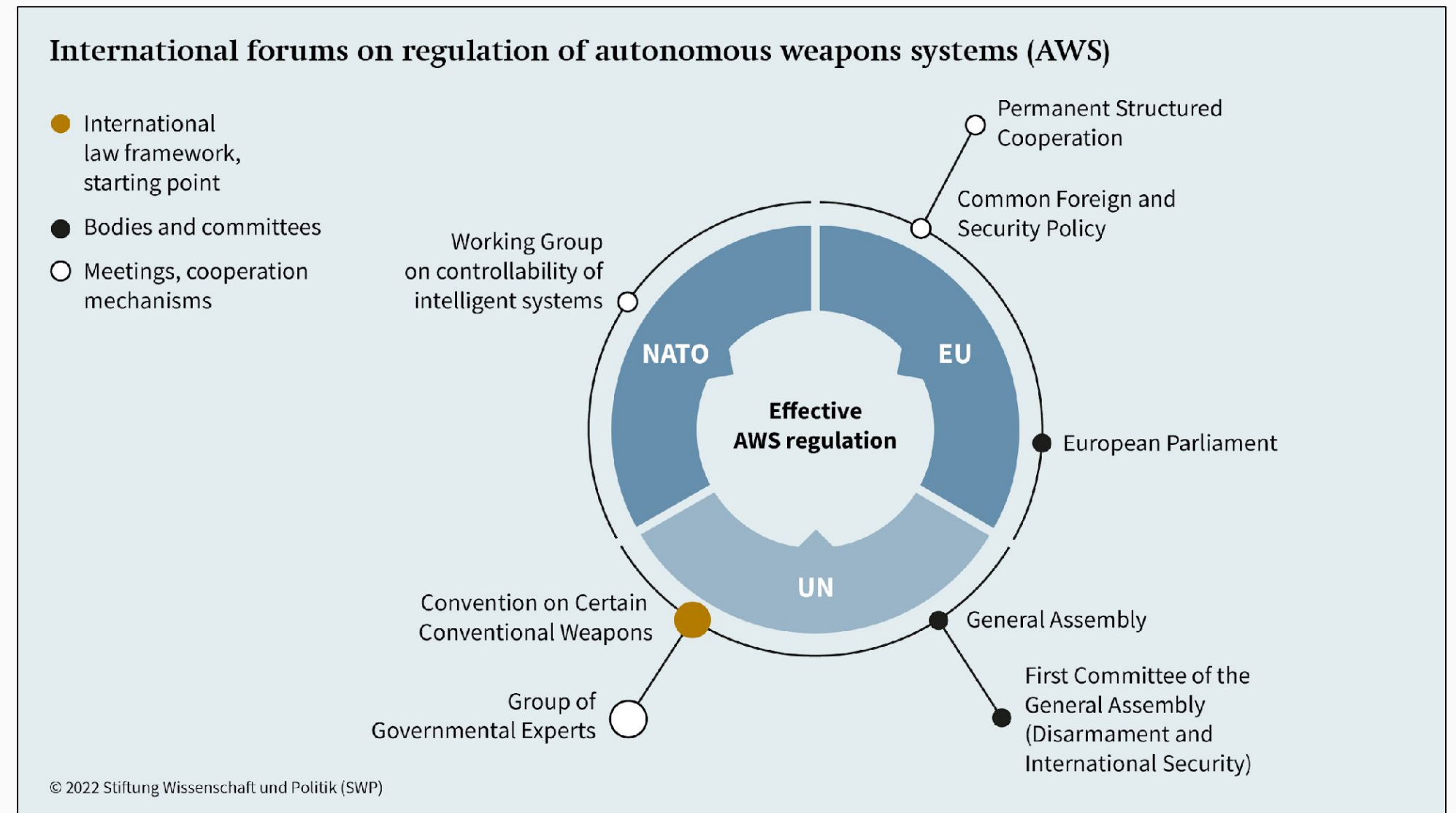
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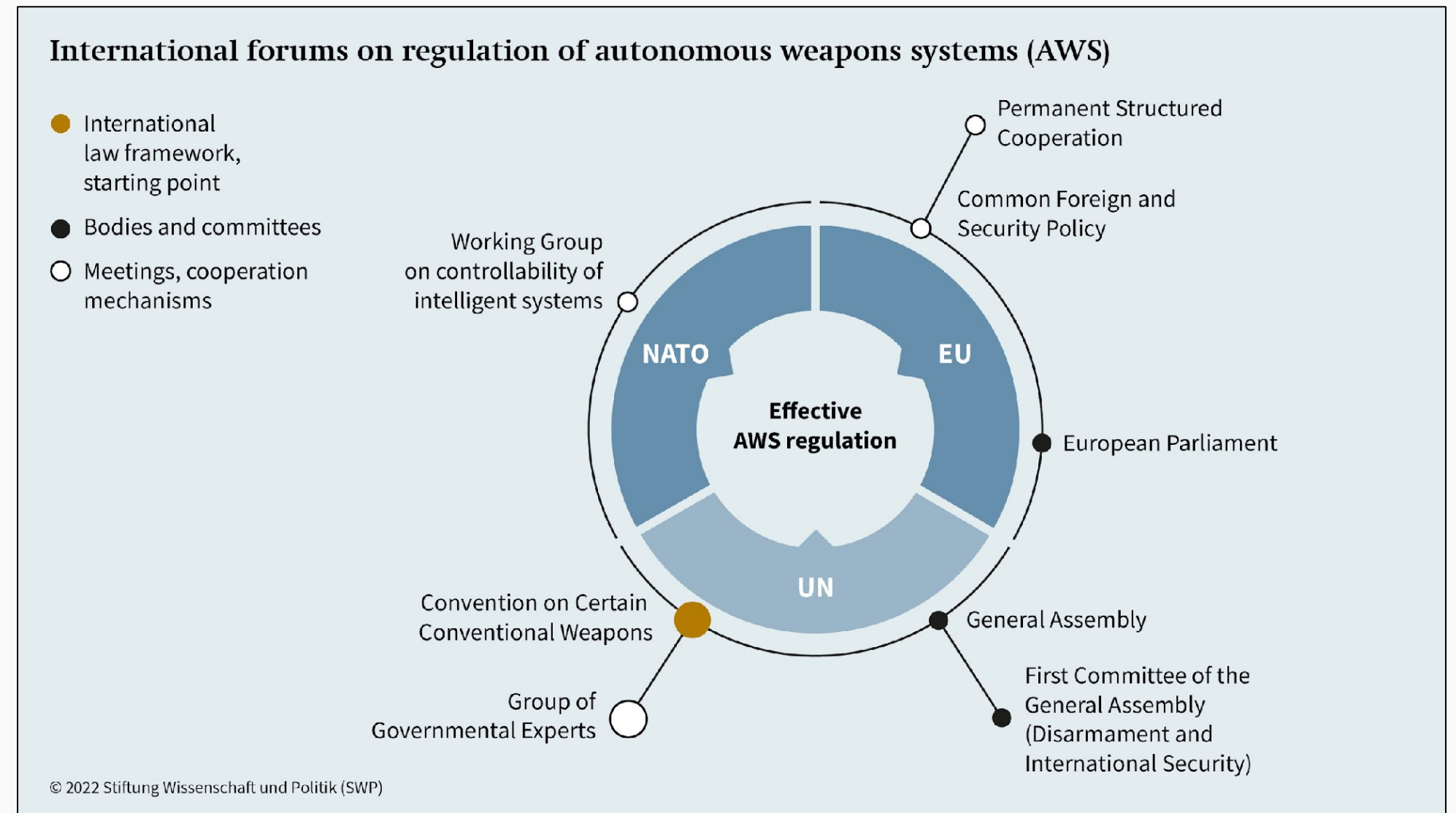
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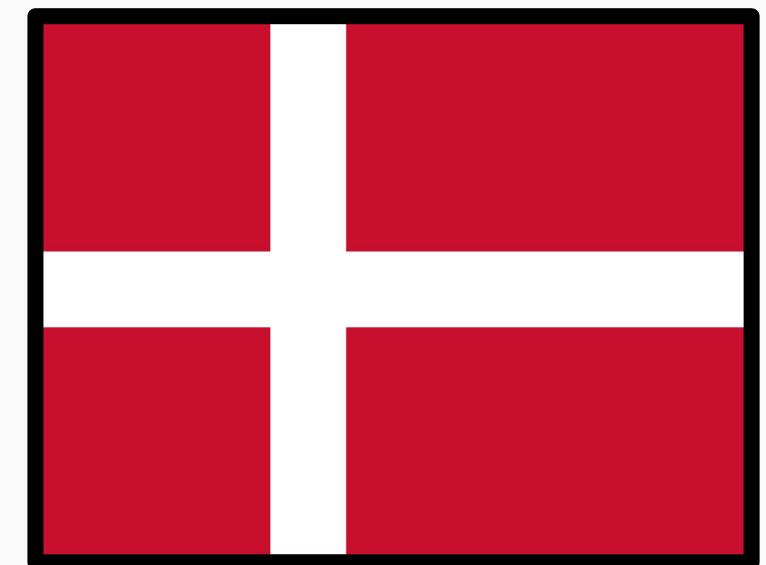
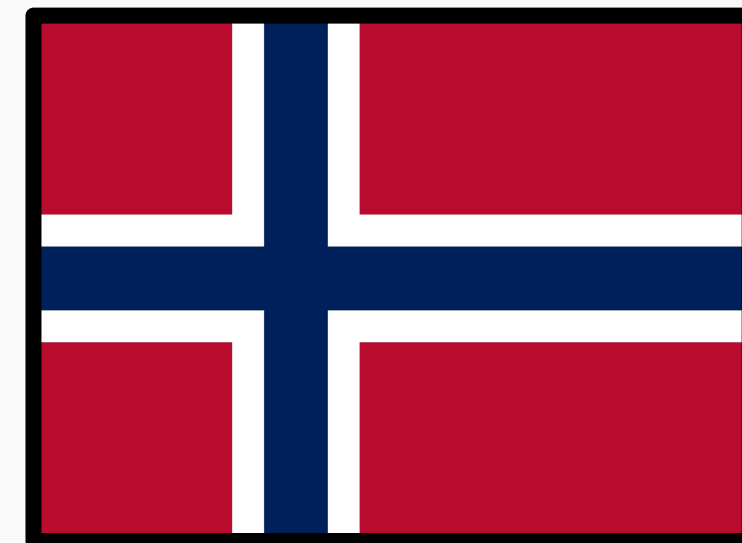
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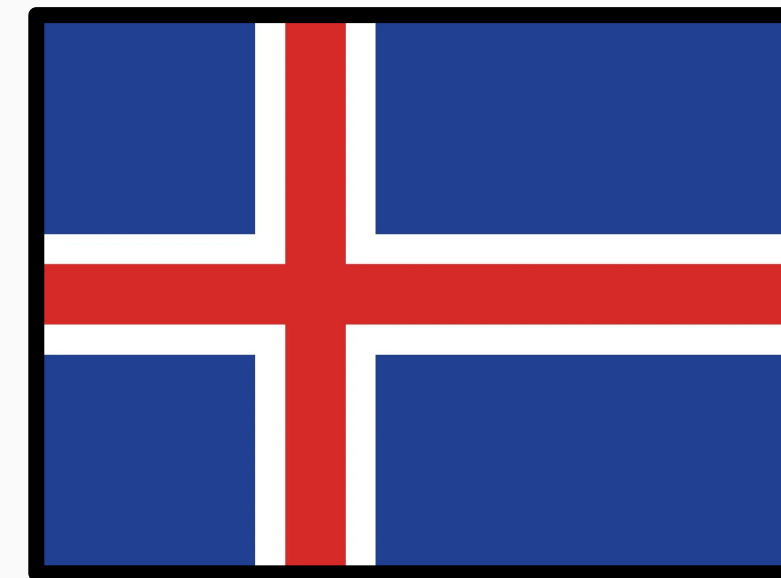
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 - Norway and Denmark: vocal advocates; co-authored the "elements of an instrument" paper (Norway backs a binding instrument by 2026)



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 - **Iceland**: the only NATO founding member with no standing army, yet it still co-signed the statement



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- **2026**, the decisive year: the UN Secretary-General and the ICRC renew the call for a binding instrument as the CCW GGE mandate expires; the Nordics stand with the two-tier majority, alongside **Brazil**.



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 - All generative AI use would have to be tested and its danger to human life calculated
 - All generative AI classified as "dangerous to human life" would be prohibited, including Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems (LAWS)



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- **How?** By linking dialogues between these communities
- **Its aim?** To support fundamental norm development and policy coherence in the AI field.

Global Commission on Responsible Artificial Intelligence in the Military Domain (GC REAIM)

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- Highlighting the essential elements to consider at each stage of the AI lifecycle (design, development, production, deployment, and use)
- Proposing governance mechanisms to ensure AI is developed and applied responsibly in military contexts

GC REAIM Expert Policy Note Series

The Global Commission on Responsible Artificial Intelligence in the Military Domain (GC REAIM) was launched during the 2023 REAIM Summit on Responsible Artificial Intelligence in the Military Domain in The Hague.

Effective Governance Through Precise Common Understanding

Authors: Edson Prestes, Nayat Sánchez-Pi and Maria Vanina Martinez

The Risks of Integrating Generative AI into Weapon Systems

Author: Vincent Boulanin

Restrictions on AI Weapons in Specific Situations

Author: Mun-eon Park

Context is Everything: Policy Implications of the Military AI Responsibility Contextualization Framework

Authors: Herwin Meerveld and Roy Lindelauf

Key Lessons from Existing Governance Initiatives for the Governance of AI in the Military Domain

Author: Li Qiang

Artificial Intelligence and Nuclear Stability: Understanding AI's Impact on Military Escalation Dynamics and Strategic Deterrence

Author: James Johnson

Applying International Law to AI in the Military Domain: An Integrated Approach

Author: Fan Yang

Mitigating the Risks of AI-Driven OODA Loops in Military Decision-Making

Author: Michael Raska

A systems engineering lifecycle approach to responsible AI

Authors: Zena Assaad and Adam Hepworth

The Human Rights Implications of Extracting Minerals and Personal Data from Africa for the Development of Military AI

Author: Adebayo Okeowo

Collective Moral Responsibility, Institutionalisation and Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems (LAWS)

Author: Seumas Miller

The Strategic Imperative of Inclusion: Global South and Middle Power Perspectives on AI in the Military Domain

Author: Mohammed Soliman

Proportionality under Pressure: AI-Based Decision-Support Systems, the Reasonable Commander Standard and Human(e) Judgment in Targeting

Author: Jessica Dorsey

The Nuts and Bolts of the Governance of Military Artificial Intelligence: A Balancing Act Between Technical Depth and Practicality

Authors: Yasmin Afina and Giacomo Persi Paoli

New and Emerging Terminologies in Ethical AI Principles: Exploring the International Law Implications in the Military Context

Author: Keketso Kgomoosotho

An Approach for Assessing Autonomous and AI-Enabled Capabilities within Weapons Systems

Authors: Ariel Conn, Zena Assaad, and Catherine Tessier

Emerging Norms around Military Applications of AI: The Case of Human Control

Author: Ingvald Bode

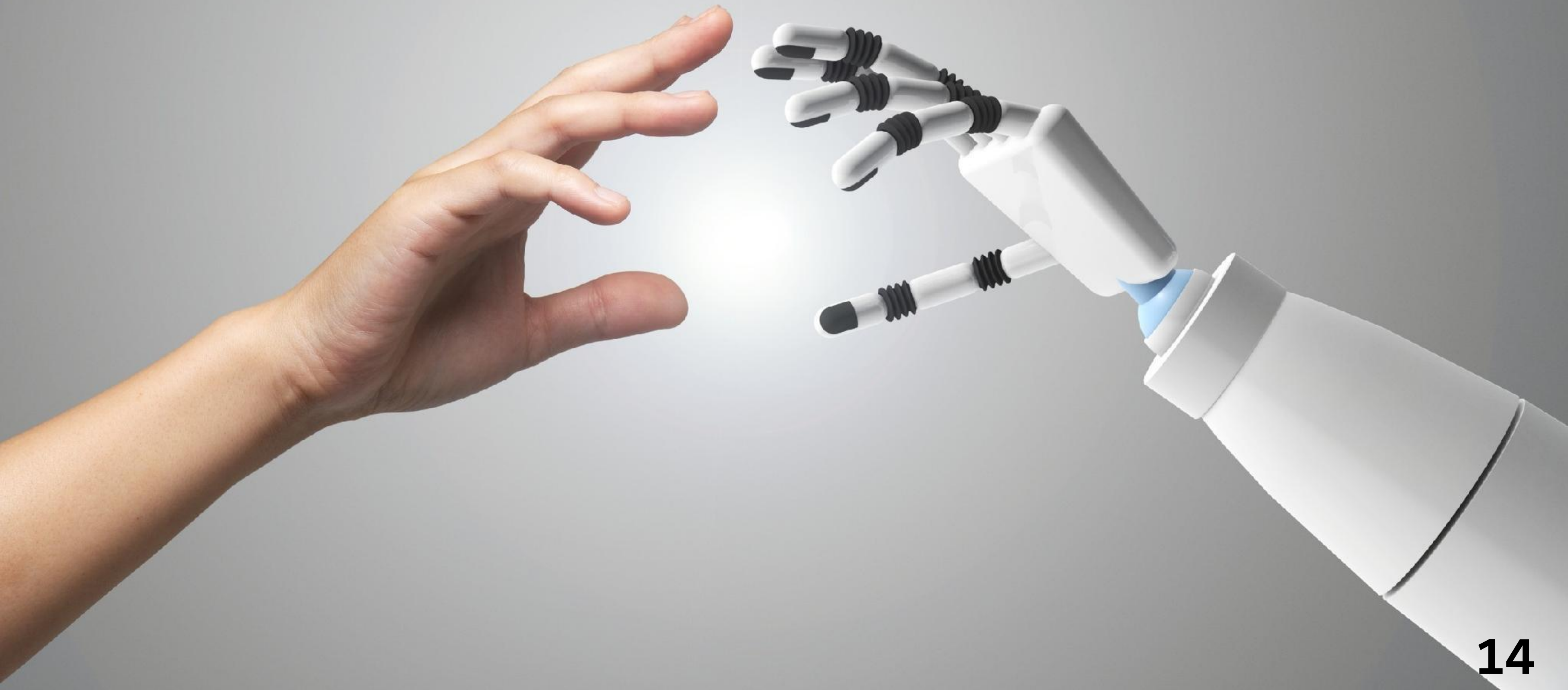
The Tactical Governance of Artificial Intelligence in the Military Domain

Authors: Giacomo Persi Paoli and Yasmin Afina

Principles of Responsible Military Artificial Intelligence and Applicable International Law

Author: Rain Liivoja

Conclusion



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- Lack of consensus hinders progress.

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- Need for coordinated global action.

14:45–15:45 **S1002, S Building**

Thank You!

Questions and contacts:
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Halmstad university, September 22–24, 2026

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D.A.C. Barone and L.B. Ciulla, "Before the Question of AI Ethics: A Constructivist Reading of Lethal Autonomous Weapons (LAWS) and its Contributions to Engineering Education," Proc. 35th EAEEIE Ann. Conf., 2026, to be published.