



MAX PLANCK INSTITUTE
FOR COMPARATIVE PUBLIC LAW
AND INTERNATIONAL LAW

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**Autonomous Weapons Systems (AWS): The Ethical and Legal Challenges of Having
Robots Apply International Humanitarian Law**

MPIL Agora

Wednesday, 31 July, 2019, 16:00-17:00, Room 014

Technological progress in the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI) led to the development of Autonomous Weapons Systems (AWS). Due to their ability to conduct an entire military operation without the technical need for human control, the possible deployment of such systems in armed conflict scenarios raises relevant ethical issues and legal questions.

After briefly pointing out the main arguments in favor of, and contrary to the use of AWS, Federica Merenda will argue in her presentation that, for different reasons, both knowledge-based and machine-learning systems are intrinsically unable to respect international humanitarian law. Its norms have been construed in order to be applied by subjects endowed with human faculties, which can be argued by looking at the theory of human judgment developed by Hannah Arendt. From a perspective of international criminal law, the deployment of AWS is at odds with the concepts of responsibility and criminal liability, and could thus lead to a lack of accountability for military action.

The presentation in this Agora is centered on the paper "Deliberazione, giudizio e responsabilità nell'epoca degli *Autonomous Weapons Systems* (AWS): sulle sfide etiche e giuridiche poste dalla sostituzione di soldati umani con sistemi robotici". It has been accepted for publication in the Italian Journal "Ragion pratica".



Federica Merenda is a Ph.D. candidate in Human Rights and Global Politics at Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna. She has also studied International Relations at the same university, as well as at the Università di Pisa, Università di Firenze (Cesare Alfieri) and Sciences Po. She also has an LL.M. in Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law at the Geneva Academy. Federica Merenda has experience in the diplomatic field as well, such as at the Embassy of Italy in the United States, the Permanent Mission of Italy to International Organisations in Geneva, international NGOs (WCADP,

Paris – Dar-es-Salaam), and international organisations (UN Human Rights Council, UNAIDS, UNFPA Georgia). She has been a visiting researcher at the Center for Ethics, Department of Philosophy, of the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich, Germany, and is currently a visiting scholar at the Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law, where she received a fellowship.

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