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17/SMS10/004

PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES

PCS 312

THE MILITARY AND NEW TECHNOLOGIES

ASSIGNMENT

Question

Kindly read up on the history and evolution of unmanned vehicles and robotic and autonomous systems.

1.Identify the reasons for the rising investments in unmanned vehicles and autonomous systems for military purposes

2.What is the implication of the growing sophistication in unmanned military technologies for future warfare?

3.How has the rising sophistication and multi-system functions of unmanned vehicles and autonomous systems impact on the will to fight of soldiers?

4.Is human still relevant in technologically driven warfare’s? Highlight the relevance of man in future warfare.

Write an essay/summary of not more than 500 words on your findings.

ANSWER

Autonomous military systems have been used by armed forces around the world for many decades. All of these can trace their past to as early as the First World War and their importance to the battlefields of the future is only set to grow exponentially. Today they can be found performing various combat roles from search and rescue, explosive disarmament, fire support, reconnaissance, logistics support and, of course, lethal combat duties. Many believe we will see fully automated lethal autonomous systems in the near future potentially making the role of human soldier obsolete. Despite other fears of heralding in a post-apocalyptic nightmare like the Terminator Universe, it should be noted that many military vehicles with combat capability are prevented from being fully autonomous presently. This is by design to ensure there is some human input at times to ensure targets are not within restricted fire zones under the laws of war set out in the Geneva Convention.

The goal of these fully autonomous systems on the battlefield is to ensure efficiency and to help military commanders make use of the information they receive as well as to make decisions that guarantee mission success and reduce casualties.

Since the formation of armies the warriors spirit has been inculcated into the brotherhood of men down from the Japanese samurai to the European knight and to the modern soldier on the battle field, his mindset is the total completion of his mission no matter the costs, however today weapons such as the drone and the nuclear bomb has taken the soldier out of the battle field and now he is separated from the direct consequences of his actions. With time this will definitely affect the warriors spirit, although it is too early to say how.

No matter the weapon system developed a human operator must be part of the kill chain the actions taken from deployment to target elimination) and therefore it is inconceivable that anytime soon the human operator will be removed from the battlefield.