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NARRATIVES OF SECURITY AND ETHICS IN HUMANITARIAN ARMS CONTROL:
GENDERING THE PATH TOWARD A NORMATIVE AND OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK
FOR LETHAL AUTONOMOUS WEAPONS SYSTEMS AT THE UNITED NATION'S
CONVENTION ON CERTAIN CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I investigate the ongoing efforts under the United Nations Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (UN-CCW) to regulate the development and potential use of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS). Weapons systems are considered autonomous when they are capable of selecting targets and decide to fire based on algorithmic machine learning – that is, without direct human input. Although LAWS are not yet fully operational, six countries have already developed rudimentary versions and research is being conducted at a fast pace. This scenario has led several state and non-state actors to launch calls for a pre-emptive ban on LAWS within the UN system, arguing that LAWS have the potential to engender catastrophic consequences for humankind and thus pose serious ethical issues. Countries at the forefront of efforts to modernize warfare have managed to resist these claims and uphold a positive ethical profile for LAWS on the grounds that high levels of autonomy in weapons systems will likely minimize collateral damage in armed conflict.

I see the production of ethics in these narratives as particularly puzzling, given that humanitarian discourses within arms control have been portrayed as transforming the field's centredness on the military needs of states. As the argument goes, the 'humanitarian turn' in arms control has made the field increasingly permeable to perspectives of security centred on the individual. The colliding ideas about ethics, however, suggest that there are limits to what type of ethical arguments can be raised in this context.

I approach the debates at the UN-CCW regarding a potential normative framework for LAWS with the aim of unpacking how actors taking these contrasting positions construct the idea of ethical and unethical weapons. I take a constructivist, feminist standpoint to show that the different concepts of security advanced in these discussions are underpinned by power relations and that gender is a useful analytical tool to illuminate this point. Thus, I seek to demonstrate how ethics is produced in connection with different perspectives about security, using Annick Wibben's feminist narrative analysis and Fiona Robinson's critical and feminist re-formulation of the *Ethics of Care*.

To conduct my analysis, I draw mainly on transcriptions of the meetings undertaken by the UN-CCW's Group of Government Experts on LAWS in 2021. I selected the narratives of Israel and Palestine as case studies, as the historical and material relations in which these actors are embedded offer an insightful viewpoint to illustrate the implications of these narratives of security and, thereby, how they can be perceived as ethical or unethical.

I conclude that the cornerstone of arguments about ethics is the representation of the individual as a referent of security. While the Palestinian narrative sees the individual's security needs as interlinked with issues of gender and ethnicity, Israel's conception of the individual erases these relational aspects of their lived experiences and subsumes the individual's security needs to the state's security needs. Moreover, on the face of the challenge posed by narratives such as Palestine's, Israel manages to uphold an ethical profile for LAWS by conceiving the normative space of arms control through a gendered Public/Private binary in which only certain concerns can be considered 'relevant'. Given that Israel's narrative draws on and reinforces a dominant narrative within arms control, it is possible to argue that the centrality of the state's military needs in arms control has not been successfully displaced and that gender plays a role in sustaining it by legitimizing a skewed distribution of care for the individual's needs across the Public/Private spheres.

1 INTRODUCTION

In 2009, political scientist Peter Singer declared that "humankind is starting to lose its 5,000-year-old monopoly of the fighting war" (Shachtman 2009). Indeed, since the outbreak of the *War on Terror*, warfighting has become increasingly intertwined with the deployment of robotic weapons. The better-known face of robotic warfare thus far is the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) or *drone*, considered a major asset in US campaigns across Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan between 2001 and 2010 (Sharkey 2010). Armed drones can be seen as part of a wider trend toward the development of military technology that allows war to be fought faster, more effectively, less costly, and without close-in combat, lowering the risk of casualties on both sides (Sauer and Schörnig 2012; Blanchard 2011).

This trend is now steering for ever-higher levels of autonomy in weapons systems. Although the conceptualization of autonomy in weapons systems is still controversial, there is wide agreement that autonomy can be loosely defined as a weapon's capability to - once activated - select and engage targets without human intervention (Heyns 2013; US Department of Defence 2012; International Committee of the Red Cross 2020). The possibility for different configurations of human-machine interaction gives rise to the classification of these weapons in "human-*on*-the-loop" weapons – whose autonomous functions need human oversight and include the possibility for the human to override the weapon – and "human-out-of-the-loop weapons" – those capable of selecting targets and firing without any human input (HRW 2012). The former sort is already in use, with some drones serving as examples (Sharkey 2010). The latter, also known as Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS), are not yet operational but research is advancing at a fast pace. Global military spending on research on LAWS is estimated to reach USD 16 billion by 2025 (Haner 2019) and six countries have already developed rudimentary versions (PAX 2019).

With the growing use of armed drones in the past years, attention has been drawn to the human rights implications of both existing and future autonomous weapons. The issue was first raised in a 2010 report by the then UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary, or Arbitrary Executions, Philip Alston, and readdressed in subsequent reports issued by his successor, Christof Heyns (Alston et. al 2020). Public interest began to escalate when a coalition of NGOs now known as the *Campaign to Stop Killer Robots* was formed in 2012 with a focus on pushing a pre-emptive ban on LAWS at the United Nations Human Rights Council. Key states, however, quickly raised objections about the appropriateness of that forum to tackle the issue. In particular, the European Union, several of its members, and the United States

argued that results could only be reached if the regulation of LAWS were to be framed not in terms of human rights but in terms of arms control (Dalberg and Finn 2013). The agenda item was then transferred to the UN Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), where deliberations have since taken place annually under the format of a Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) tasked with discussing and recommending policy options.

The re-framing of the international regulation of LAWS as an arms control issue raises questions about the limits and possibilities of the so-called 'humanitarian' turn in the field of arms control. International arms control, as currently understood, was conceived to stabilize East-West relations during the Cold War and bridge the two blocs' goals of achieving national security and preventing nuclear confrontation (Krause and Latham, 1998:27). Since the end of the Cold War, however, a series of humanitarian campaigns led to the prohibition or regulation of weapons considered 'inhumane', such as the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. It has been argued that these developments were enabled by the emergence of a new "ethical force of compassion" (Hynek 2018a). As the argument goes, the dominant concept of security within arms control was widened to encompass the individual as a referent of security and undermined the prevalence of the military interests of states in arms control fora, thereby transforming the nature of arms control and giving rise to "humanitarian security regimes" (Garcia 2015; Hanson 2017).

In this context, discussions on LAWS at the CCW are particularly puzzling given that ethical discourses are at the crux of the intense polarization between actors calling for an immediate and comprehensive ban and states categorically opposing the creation of any new legal obligations. Despite 'pro-ban' actors insisting that LAWS pose nefarious and unethical challenges for humanity, 'ban-resisting' actors have managed to uphold a "positive ethical profile" for LAWS by emphasizing their potential for 'humanizing' warfare (Hynek and Solovyeva 2021). Unsurprisingly, the bulk of pro-ban actors participating at the GGE on LAWS are Global South states and civil society organizations, whereas the ban-resisting side is composed of the highly militarized and technologically advanced states at the forefront of research on LAWS – e.g., the European Union, the United States, the United Kingdom, Russia, Israel, and India (Haner and Garcia 2019; Haner 2019).

This scenario puts into question what kind of ethical considerations are enabled or constrained by the post-cold war 'humanitarian' turn towards the individual as a referent of security and whether it indeed has challenged dominant concepts of security. In this light, I explore the production of 'ethics' and its connection with the concept of security within the GGE on LAWS through a qualitative case study of the GGE's deliberations on elements of a

possible normative framework on LAWS. With attention to the power asymmetries cutting across this discussion, I will focus on the narratives advanced by Israel and Palestine.

I propose that theories within Feminist Security Studies (FSS) offer a fruitful path for exploring the construction of robotic warfare as ethical warfare. Although it constitutes a diverse field, a unifying claim within FSS is that gender is constitutive of security norms (Sjoberg 2016). The body of work produced within FSS has problematized and attempted to de-naturalize the dominant (neo)realist "visions of the political" that underpin the theory and practice of security (Wibben 2018), outlining how they constrain the possibilities for transformative security practices by privileging masculinist, militarist values. Looking at the GGE on LAWS through a gender lens can shed light on arms control as an arena of competing security discourses underpinned by gendered values and logic regarding what security is or should be.

I will draw primarily on two feminist theories - Annick Wibben's (2011) narrative approach to security and Fiona Robinson's critical reformulation of the *Ethics of Care*. Wibben's narrative approach aims to de-construct the dominant (neo)realist framework of security, in which the meaning of security is essentially fixed around the military needs of states. From this vantage point, the (neo)realist framework legitimizes state practices that create insecurity for vulnerable populations in the name of state security. Wibben suggests that, for security to become transformative - as suggested in relation to the 'humanitarian turn' in arms control - it is necessary to recognize the ways in which actors at the margins of power express their security needs and construct new security meanings. I use this approach to outline the Palestinian and Israeli attempt to advance their representations of security and how this relates to the perception of LAWS as ethical or unethical.

Fiona Robinson's *Ethics of Care* offers a basis to further excavate the gendered nature of ban-resisting narratives. Using Robinson's insights, I discuss how Israel's narrative legitimizes violent practices of state security by drawing on a gendered distribution of 'care' across the Public/Private binary through which they narrate the (neorealist) world of arms control. Robinson's insights allow me to show how ban-resisting narratives rely on this binary to (re)produce arms control as a normative space in which 'care' does not belong. Ultimately, this challenges not only the discourse of 'ethical' autonomous warfare but also the understanding of the 'humanitarian turn' in arms control.

Therefore, in this thesis, I answer the problem formulation bellow.

PROBLEM FORMULATION

"How does gender contribute to shaping the idea of (un)ethical warfare emerging in narratives of security advanced by Israel and Palestine at the Convention on Conventional Weapons' Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems?"

THESIS STRUCTURE

This thesis will be structured in the following manner. At the outset, I introduce my choice of theories and piece together a theoretical framework. Then, to contextualize and facilitate understanding of my analysis, I explain the purpose and structure of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), the work of the Group of Governmental Experts, and the state of discussions on LAWS in this forum after eight years of cooperation on a possible normative framework. Subsequently, I flesh out the method I will use to approach the GGE's work on LAWS in 2021 and proceed with my analysis, whose structure I elaborate on further in that section. Following the analysis, I select two main ethical considerations narrated by Palestine to illustrate in more detail the gendered and excluding dynamic of Israel's construction of ethics – namely, the much-debated issue of social biases in algorithms and the issue of the vulnerability of Global South populations. Finally, I conclude by relating my findings to the wider puzzle of how the 'humanitarian turn' in arms control has changed the security concept in arms control.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This thesis aims to uncover the production of ethics within arms control as a gendered process of meaning-making related to security as a field of theory and practice. I thereby take a constructivist approach, working from the assumption that political structures – such as the field of security - are constructed through a dialectical process involving human agency and are thus subject to change according to whether actors reproduce or challenge them (Bryman 2016:28-30). The theories I use here were to provide an in-depth qualitative exploration of this process.

This theory section will then be put together as follows. Firstly, as ethics and security are interwoven concepts in humanitarian arms control processes, the best point of departure here is to understand security as a field of theory and practice. This will give insight into why and how security should be approached through narratives, which are understood as processes in which actors use their agency to produce, reproduce, and challenge political structures. Therefore, I provide a brief account of how the concept of security has become contested and in what ways critical and feminist scholars have sought to reformulate it. This leads to an

outline of Annick Wibben's narrative approach, which serves as an overarching approach to bring out what meanings of security Israel and Palestine mobilize within the GGE, as well as how they attempt to control these meanings within the debate.

Followingly, I present how the role of ethics has been conceptualized in the literature on security and arms control and outline different views on how ethics have shaped the post-cold war 'humanitarian' turn in the field. This will ground the idea of ethics in the context of security and arms control, opening the theoretical framework to Fiona Robinson's account of how gendered power relations shape ethical thought in international security.

2.1 SECURITY AS A CONTESTED CONCEPT: FROM SECURITY STUDIES TO A NARRATIVE APPROACH TO SECURITY

Although Security Studies, as a distinct academic field, can be traced to the end of the First World War, its origins are more commonly associated with the Cold War (Wibben 7). During this period, Security Studies were primarily concerned with explaining the dynamics of East-West relations and nuclear deterrence, thus remaining largely dominated by neorealist accounts of security (Baldwin 126).

According to Krause and Williams, an influential explanation of security studies, representative of the neorealist tradition, is provided by Stephen Walt in a 1991 article entitled *Renaissance of Security Studies* (231). From Walt's perspective, security scholars are primarily concerned with war: "security studies assumes that conflict between states is always a possibility. […] Accordingly, security studies may be defined as the study of the threat, use, and control of military force" (Walt 212). Thus, in neorealist terms, the ultimate object of security is the state, and state security is necessarily achieved through military means.

However, since the end of the collapse of the Soviet Union, many scholars began to question the prevalence of security concepts that focused on external military threats to the state (Kolodziej, 1999; Krause and Williams, 1996). Some attribute this to neorealism's failure to explain the collapse of the Soviet Union at the height of its military might (Kolodziej 17), while others point to a perceived decline in military conflicts between states and the rise of concerns with non-military global issues such as poverty, drug trafficking, and environmental crises (Baldwin 126).

In any case, a divisive debate has emerged in the post-Cold War between neorealists and scholars attempting to revise the field of security studies to accommodate security concerns other than those posited by neorealism. Krause and Williams have classified these efforts [to revise the field] within two 'axes': studies aiming at 'broadening' the concept of security by

pointing to types of threats other than military threats (e.g., environmental issues), and studies aiming at 'deepening' security studies by adding referents other than the nation-states (e.g., at the individual, regional, or global security) (230). These advances were met with resistance, as neorealists argued that they risked overstretching and thereby emptying the concept of security (Walt 1991).

To date, the field of security studies remains divided between "orthodox" and "critical" security studies (Jabri 18). The former encompasses (neo)realist perspectives such as Walt's, whereas the latter problematizes the effects of security practices on non-state actors (Jabri 18). Most critical security scholars "agree that security and insecurity are constructed, rather than being an inherent part of the international system" and that the state can be a source of insecurity to its own citizens when pursuing its security goals (Nyman and Burke 4).

Nonetheless, the burgeoning body of work produced under the rubric of Critical Security Studies (CSS) comprehends diverging strategies to confront the narrow concept of security established by orthodox security studies. Nyman and Burke (2016), for example, divide critical security scholars into those who believe that security practices can be used to achieve positive outcomes for vulnerable populations – e.g., by 'widening' and 'deepening' the concept – and "anti-security" scholars who defend that the concept of security inherently unethical and should thereby be dropped: for them, "security is neither a desirable goal nor objectively good". The concept, they argue, is loaded with state-centric, militarist connotations; therefore, extending it risks enabling the state's military control over more areas of life (5).

Feminist engagement with CSS has led to the emergence of Feminist Security Studies (FSS). Observing the discussion on how state security affects non-state actors, FSS scholars sought to bring to the security debate decades of feminist knowledge that were never recognized as work on security (Sjoberg 2016). For example, feminist studies on war, peace, and militarism consistently pointed out how state militarism – and thereby practices of security – has been rooted in and reproduces relations of exclusion and oppression (Wibben 2011; Sjoberg 2016; Shepherd 2019).

From an FSS perspective, Annick Wibben (2011) echoes "anti-security" scholars in explaining that security practices often exacerbate the insecurities of vulnerable populations and, as such, the notion that security is an inherently good thing should be challenged. Unlike "anti-security" scholars, however, she argues that feminists should not drop but engage with the concept of security in order to prevent that "traditionalists have the uncontested say about what security refers to, especially because security is so powerful when evoked" (113). For Wibben (2011), the 'issue' with security is that the persisting dominance of the (neo)realist

framework, focused on the role of the state as referent and provider of security states, prevents the recognition of people's insecurities. Undermining the potential of security to produce negative effects on people's lived experiences depends on de-constructing the (neo)realist framework and making room for the recognition of alternative meanings of security (Wibben 6).

In outlining her narrative approach, Wibben considers Securitization Theory, as formulated by the Copenhagen School (CS), an opportune point of departure to 'open' security. This is because securitization conceptualizes security not as a fixed concept but as a field of practice:

> This conception of security as practice opens up space for debate, also because it alerts us to the contextual nature of security meanings. Once we realize that ''it is in this practice that the issue becomes a security issue'' (Buzan et al. 1998: 24), we can begin to debate the politics of securitization.

In this thesis, I will use the concept of securitization as a starting point to help clarify how security is narrated. However, the CS's contribution to 'opening' security is limited. Below, I will outline the securitization theory and elaborate on its shortcomings concerning the goal of 'opening' security and explain why Wibben's narrative approach is preferable.

2.1.1 Securitization and De-securitization

Aiming to explain the "logic of security itself to find out what differentiates security and the process of securitization from that which is merely political" (Buzan et al. 4-5), Securitization theory theorizes security as socially constructed. This means that, rather than analysing an actor's response to a 'real' threat, the Copenhagen School explores how actors constitute their concerns as 'security' issues and what implications the security label produces.

From this perspective, an issue may become securitized when presented as an existential threat or, in other words, when "an issue is dramatized and presented as an issue of supreme priority" (Buzan et al. 26). This construction is conceptualized as a 'speech act' which must follow the "grammar of security" – i.e., the securitizing actor must construct a recognizable plot consisting of an existential threat, a "point of no return", and a "possible way out" (Buzan et al. 33).

Securitizing an issue allows an actor to move the issue across a three-tiered 'hierarchy' of public issues conceptualized according to how much salience they are given in the public agenda: non-politicized – i.e., issues which are not under consideration in public debate; politicized – i.e., issues which are object of public policy; and securitized – "by labelling it as

security, an agent claims a need for a right to treat it by extraordinary means" (Buzan et al. 26).

Securitization, however, is seen within the CS through a negative lens. Like "anti-security" scholars, the proponents of ST argue that the securitization of an issue concentrates significant power in the hands of the state. Because a successful securitization move withdraws a public issue from the realm of normal politics and warrants the state's deployment of extraordinary means to counter a threat, this is seen as a producing a counter-democratic effect (Wæver 2011:469). Although securitization can be an effective way to deal with an issue, given its power to mobilizes and direct the state's resources toward combatting a threat, its anti-democratic effect is deemed to outweigh potential benefits (Wæver 2011:469). Therefore, securitization theory favours *de-securitization* – that is, the transfer of a securitized issue back to the realm of normal politics.

Despite its reception as one of the most significant contributions to the field of security studies (Ciuta 302; McDonald 564), the CS has not been immune to criticism. Particularly relevant here are the charges that focus on the conservative effect of its formulations. Firstly, McDonald (2008) argues that the rigid distinction between "security" and "normal politics" overlooks the fact that security is a *site of contestation* – i.e., as a powerful political tool for mobilization of resources, security is shaped and shapes what a community identifies as its core values and priorities; thus, defining what security means and how it should be achieved is an intensely political activity.

Moreover, Securitization Theory falls short from advancing the goal of 'opening' security because it does not question the foundations of the (neo)realist security framework. As discussed by Williams (2003) and Ciuta (2009), the logic of security identified by the CS is deliberately informed by a realist logic of survival. Tough the idea that security is socially constructed gives it a second 'layer', in which the meaning of security is determined through the speech act, the function of a speech act is preconceived; it always expresses a survival need and, consequently, follows the logic of realist survival.

In the same vein, even though survival can mean different things according to each referent, the relationship between referents and survival are more or less fixed. For example, in its attempt to move away from the state as a referent of security, the CS adds 'society' as a possible referent: "Here, it is not the territorial inviolability (''military'' security) or governmental legitimacy and autonomy (''political'' security) that is threatened. Rather, it is the identity of a society, its sense of ''we-ness,'' that is at stake" (Williams 518). Hence, referents such as "the state" or "society" seem to be taken for granted, and their core security interests, to an extent, seem to be predetermined.

In this sense, Wibben's approach proves more illuminating, as it proposes that focus should be on unpacking the construction of subjectivities and how they shape perceptions of security and insecurity. This is because Wibben proposes that security is approached through narratives. Narratives are always told from different points of view, and the identity of the narrator is recognized as essential in shaping it. This helps understand security as a site of contestation, as suggested by MacDonald (2008), bringing focus into the power relations that make the same practice of security be seen through different lenses, which will be central in de-constructing the meanings of security advanced by Israel and Palestine and how they shape the idea of what is ethical in relation to arms control.

2.2 A NARRATIVE APPROACH TO SECURITY

According to Wibben (2011), narratives are the primary way through which people make sense of the world. They are constituted by modes of representation and processes of interpretation that shape what we accept as real. Modes of representation and processes of interpretation, however, are rarely original. They tend to draw on and reinforce aspects of the existing "social, symbolic, and political order" (44). As such, they simultaneously enable and limit representation because this order dictates "what meanings are possible (i.e., meaningful, reasonable, and rational) and which are not (i.e., meaningless, preposterous, and irrational)" (43): "Authoritative narratives conform to and confirm the economic, social, symbolic, and political order: 'It is because the events described conduce to the establishment of social order or fail to do so that they find a place in the narrative attesting to their reality'" (69). Therefore, there is significant agency involved in constructing narratives, but they are also shaped by wider social structures.

A narrative approach employs tools from narratology to explain how some narratives appear to make more sense than others and how they limit or dismiss alternatives by imposing one narrative form. In that sense, a narrative analysis aims at exploring how narratives construct meaning through representation and how it affects our understanding of the world (44).

2.2.1 NARRATOLOGICAL TOOLS

Wibben's narratological 'toolbox' is based on Mieke Bal's poststructuralist approach to narratology. Drawing on Bal's work, Wibben proposes three levels of analysis: the text, the story, and the fabula. Assessing the three levels is compared to looking at the same dataset with different lenses (Wibben 46). At the text level, the analysis focuses on the 'medium' – i.e., the language, imagery, or sounds through which the narrative is conveyed. The second level refers

to the ordering processes and techniques through which the 'fabula' is presented. The elements of the story and the techniques usually employed to order them are summarized in the table below:

Elements	Processes at story level
Events	The events are arranged in a sequence that can differ from the chronological sequence.
Time	The amount of time that is allotted in the story to the various elements of the fabula is determined with respect to the amount of time that these elements take up in the fabula.
Actors	The actors are provided with distinct traits. In this manner, they are individualized and transformed into characters.
Locations	The locations where events occur are also given distinct characteristics and are thus transformed into specific places.
Relationships	In addition to the necessary relationships among actors, events, locations, and time, all of which were already describable in the layer of the fabula, other relationships (symbolic, allusive, traditional, etc.) may exist among the various elements.
Points of view	A choice is made from among the various "points of view" from which the elements can be presented. The resulting *focalization*, the relationship between who perceives and what is perceived, produces subjectivity. [1]

The story level is central in assessing the framing of the narrative, since the way in which each of these elements is ordered constitutes the specific meanings of the fabula:

> The story is the result of several ordering processes during which, through various techniques, […] ideology is inscribed' (Bal 1997: 79). Although the theme 'good wins over evil' is common to many narratives, the way in which its elements are ordered produces the aspects of a particular story, provides specific nuances of its meaning, and makes it distinguishable from all others (Wibben 48).

Wibben (2011) attaches particular importance to two ordering elements included in the table above: "actors" and "focalizors", which are crucial in creating subjectivity. Focalization is created through narration and conveys the relationship between the focalizor and the subject (actor) or object in focus. In other words, it is about identifying whose voice represents a subject or object and who is being represented.

When it comes to security, actors at the text level may become *referents* of security or *providers* of security at the level of the fabula. Wibben (2011) argues that, establishing these characters, security narratives are "also constitutive of us as subjects with discernible identities, possessing characteristics, interests, responsibilities, and histories" (69). Thus, the way through which referents and providers of security are represented shapes their perceived or perceivable

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[1] Borrowed from Wibben 48.

security needs and thus determines what meaning is attributed to security in a securitising move. According to Wibben, "Paying attention to focalization can help to indicate the subtle infusion of the narrative with particular ideals, be they specific to an academic discipline, a worldview, or a particular author" (49).

Here, another point of interest is omission or *ellipsis*. What is left out of the framing of the narrative can be just as important as what was uttered in the articulation and ordering of the elements:

> What has been omitted can be of great importance, as is the fact that it has been omitted. In this case, the omissions are apparent through what is preserved elsewhere. Paying attention to omission is of great importance to feminists; historically women's lives and their contributions tended to be excluded from dominant (state) narratives […] However, feminists often find it more useful to measure silences. By looking at what a story does not say, cannot say, and, most strikingly, refuses to say, the epistemic violence of ellipsis can be pointed to and contested (Wibben 61)

Finally, producing a 'fabula' is the goal of the narrator and thus this third level constitute the point of interest for narrative analysis. Traditionally, the goal of analysis at this level has been to uncover what narratologists thought of as the universal plot – the representation of an initial situation, a challenge, and a solution that leads back to the beginning (Wibben 50). In Bal's poststructural theory, however, there is no single structure to be 'uncovered'. Rather, multiple plots remain possible, and the goal should not be to fit all elements of the story into a preconceived structure. Wibben (2011) cautions against "the danger of a singular plot" (52): "The underlying ideas of progress and linearity, of mastery and truth, which are characteristic of plot as traditionally conceived, are problematic… There might be a plot of narration, focused on the narrator, rather than on the reader's assumed desire for a clearly structured fabula" (Wibben 52).

2.2.2 THE TRADITIONAL SECURITY NARRATIVE AND THE POSSIBILITY FOR COUNTERNARRATIVES

According to Wibben, a traditional (neo)realist security narrative orders the elements of the story in the following way: "(1) threats that locate danger; (2) referents to be secured; (3) agents charged with providing security; and (4) means by which threats are contained and, so the tale is told, security provided" (Wibben 7). In other words, the elements of the story lead to a 'fabula' of security in terms of initial situation/challenge (identifying a threat and referents to be secured)/solution (agents charged with providing security and means by which the threat can be contained). At the level of the 'fabula', it is possible to recognize the parallel with

securitization theory. Identifying the 'fabula' of a traditional security narrative is equivalent to identifying how threats are constructed in relation to a referent of security and what kind of responses they warrant to fix a given security issue.

However, for Wibben, the fabula can be less relevant than the ordering at the story level, which, as mentioned, is deemed crucial in attributing meaning to the fabula. Contrary to the speech act in the securitisation model, the focus of the narrative is not only on the *form* of the fabula, but – crucially – on the *framing* of the narrative at the text and the story level (Wibben 80). If the analyst's goal is to identify and deconstruct the 'logic of security', this is different from the type of analysis enabled by the Copenhagen School because it goes beyond explaining how existential threats are articulated in relation to pre-given subjects. The point is, rather, to explore how particular representations of subjects and objects through deep-rooted discourses may arrest or enable alternative meanings. Pointing to a single referent always risks representing it within the boundaries of a frame:

> What is more, the question ''Whose security?'' serves a similar function as ''Where are the women?'' for feminist IR. Although each question offers a possible inroad for (feminist) contestations, they remain limited when the social, symbolic, economic, and political order within which they emerge remains intact, that is, the order within which ''woman'' or ''security'' get articulated restricts possible meanings—and thus possible reformulations— for each term.

Wibben (2011) argues that orthodox approaches to security are shaped by a particular kind of ordering. The mark of a traditional ordering of elements at story level follows the "logic of realist nation-state security" as it was historically developed through "practices that insist on the imposition of meanings that privilege state-centred, military forms of security" (44). In particular, this ordering is shaped by logics of sovereignty and the understanding of the world as anarchical and vulnerable to competition between states. This also implies that the meanings and practices of security "are fixed primarily in relation to the military requirements of supposedly sovereign states" (70).

Furthermore, a relevant aspect of narratives is that they might entice counternarratives. However, instead of challenging them, counternarratives may also sustain dominant narratives if they draw on the same frames and representations. Counternarratives challenge their dominant counterparts by modifying the frames contained in their stories: "Counternarratives work through and beyond existing narratives and transform them by drawing on events, ideas, and actions not usually heeded when constructing security narratives" (Wibben 57).

A possible example of failed counternarrative is the narrative advanced by the United Nations Development programme's (UNDP 1994) concept of *human security*. Following the emergence of the 'widening' and 'broadening' debates within security studies, the human security agenda proposed a conceptual shift from a state-centric to a human-rights-based approach to security, bringing the empowerment of individuals to the centre of security practices. The report criticised the "excessive militarisation" of traditional security frameworks, emphasizing its deleterious focus on deterrence and territorial security (40). (In)security was then re-defined in terms of development - e.g., related to economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, political insecurity (30).

Yet, a range of critiques of human security has emerged since then, many arguing that human security has not managed to substantially change the traditional security frameworks. For example, critics argue that human security approaches remain largely state centric. While the proposed conceptual shift promoted an individual-centred definition security, the state was still seen as the ultimate provider of security. Therefore, "the anti-militarist call that identified the state as a creator of insecurity was balanced against recognition of the legitimate role of the state in providing security" (Stavrianakis 9). This tension is deemed to have transformed security but left intact its militarist roots, since it constitutes "a mode of governmentality", being used to justify various state interests (Robinson 48). Wibben also argues that proponents of this concept never specify whose security would take precedence in case of conflict between state security and people's security. This is a relevant observation in terms of challenging traditional security narratives effectively because the meanings of security advanced and legitimized by state practices are often "built on the insecurity of its most vulnerable populations'' (Tickner 2005, quoted by Wibben 89).

2.3 SECURITY, ETHICS, AND HUMANITARIAN ARMS CONTROL PROCESSES

Wibben's tools for deconstructing a narrative's frame at the story level are consequential in mapping the construction of ethical discourses about LAWS. However, her approach does not expressly account for the dynamic between the elements of a security narrative and ethical considerations. To unpack these connections and understand their place within a narrative of security, I will add insights from CSS scholars and bring on some reflections about the historical linkages between ethics and security in Humanitarian Arms Control (HAC).

According to Macdonald (2016): "The ethics and politics of security, in both theory and practice, are significantly determined by the choice of referent object […] making sense of the ethical assumptions and implications of different security discourses necessitates attention

to whose security we are talking about" (32). This means that the terms on which a given referent object of security is represented in a narrative tend to reveal what ethical discourse underpins a narrative of security and vice-versa. In other words, the meaning of security is shaped by ethical concerns because these concerns determine who can be seen as a referent of security or whose security is valuable. This is supported by Mitchell's argument that security "determines the scope of ethical considerations and erects boundaries between those beings that are deemed ethically considerable and those who are not" (Mitchell 61).

The dynamic between security and ethical discourses is often taken as a defining feature of humanitarian arms control processes, such as the ongoing process at the GGE on LAWS. Many accounts of post-cold war HAC processes emphasize that the stigmatization of weapons previously considered unexceptional and indispensable for national security was possible due to the reconfiguration of security around the human referent (Garcia 2015; Hynek "Theorizing"; Hynek "Revisioning"). That being the case, the focus on the individual as a referent of security functions as an enabler for the emergence of security norms that constrain the state's elbowroom to choose between means and modes of warfare.

Seeking to elucidate how post-cold war humanitarian campaigns were able to impact security regimes, Hynek ("Theorizing") advances similar considerations. The author argues that, in the nineteenth century, states saw a systemic need to "civilize aspects of industrialized warfare" (427) and thus the individual gradually emerged as a referent object of security and facilitated the establishment of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). While this trend was interrupted by the advent of the Cold War, it was reuptake as the ensuing neo-liberal world order moved from sovereignty to human rights as a central "ethical force of compassion" in the 1990s, thereby "fixing" the concept of security "upon a human dimension previously within the sovereign purview of states" (84).

Thus, this line of explanation suggests that, to some extent, the rise of neo-liberal ethics displaced the (neo)realist framework of security. In that case, neoliberalism could be characterized as a successful counternarrative to the dominant (neo)realist framework of security and Wibben's argument about the dominance of (neo)realist frameworks of security would be misplaced in the field of arms control. Yet, other scholarly voices contend that liberalism and state-centric militarism are far from opposing forces within HAC (Stavrianakis 2016; Cooper 2011). Rather, the rise of liberal forms of ethical discourse embedded in human rights and humanitarian law have served to entrench the centrality of the military interests of the state in arms control by legitimizing high-tech forms of war which can be portrayed as minimizing civilian casualties (Stavrianakis 2016:845).

In this context, it is interesting to point out Cooper's (2011) elaborated analysis of the relation between humanitarian considerations and securitisation in the HAC agenda. Looking at two HAC processes – i.e., to ban landmines and cluster munitions -, he adds that the prohibition of these weapons was *partly* facilitated by the reframing of the issue as a "human security issue" focused on the "security of the individuals, communities, and the human as a collective" instead of "an arms control issue" centred around the security of the state (140). According to this author, the success of previous humanitarian campaigns was also contingent upon a relational construction of weapons categories. More specifically, the representation of "pariah weapons" played a role in constructing an ethical profile for "heroic weapons" – i.e., weapons "deemed central to national defence" and/or "deemed to embody positive values" (144). In relation to both landmines and cluster munitions, the issue brought to the HAC agenda was not that the weapons were designed to take human life, but designed to kill in a special way, deemed particularly inhumane because it disproportionally affected civilians (Cooper 145). As pariah weapons as de-legitimized according to their impact on civilians, weapons that did not produce that type of effect were increasingly legitimized. In that sense, HAC processes are characterized by a "spectrum of security" extending from "normal, run-of-the mill, unproblematic technologies of killing, to ones of extra special concern", depending on how they can be portrayed to impact civilians (151).

What is more, Cooper (2011) advances that, in some cases, successful processes of securitization depended upon simultaneously securitizing "pariah" weapons in relation to the individual and "de-securitizing" those same weapons in relation to the state by de-securitizing, Cooper means that the usefulness of the weapons to ensuring the state's security needed to be challenged, enabling further discussion about the effects of their deployment. Put differently, not only these weapons needed to be proven catastrophic for civilians, but they also needed to be proven unnecessary or inefficient from the state's point of view (140). Therefore, Cooper also defends that the post-Cold War 'humanitarian turn' did not necessarily challenge the centrality of the military interests of the state so much as legitimized certain forms of military technology over others.

Cooper's analysis then seems to reinforce Stavrianakis' (2019) that the rise of human security and humanitarian discourses, in their liberal form, did not transcend but transform state-centric forms of militarism. Thus, uncertainty remains as to how much weight can be assigned to the rise of the individual as a referent of security in displacing the centrality of the state as a referent of security within arms control. Turning back to Wibben, this suggests that there is a need to problematize not only whether the individual can be considered the referent

of security but how the individual and its security needs are 'ordered' within narratives of security that legitimize violent state practices such as high-precision warfare.

In this light, to further understand the production of ethics in relation to security, I will use Fiona Robinson's *Ethics of Care*. Like Wibben, Robinson is concerned with "the ways in which our normative and ontological understandings of security serve to reinforce, rather than challenge, existing relations of power, thus perpetuating and even deepening conditions of insecurity for much of the world's population" (41). This approach goes beyond looking at ethics in security through the dichotomy between pre-given referents of security and emphasizes the role of power relations in shaping the ways in which the individual's needs can be perceived in discourses about security. A central aspect of Robinson's theory explored here is that this process is profoundly related to gendered conceptions of international relations.

2.4 FIONA ROBINSON'S *ETHICS OF CARE*

The ethics of care approach first emerged as a form of moral reasoning. One of the most prominent articulations of the theory was offered by Carol Gilligan, whose early works aimed at moving away from the traditional Western goal of uncovering a universal model for moral thought and behaviour through rationalist methods. Within Gilligan's work, moral behaviour means to respond to the needs of others through attentive *listening, patience, and understanding* (31). Rather than universality, it emphasizes *relationality* – i.e., it works under the core understanding that subjects and their needs are not fixed but flexible and shaped by their relations with others.

In the 1990s, scholarly attention was drawn to the political implications of the ethics of care. Feminists built upon Carol Gillian's early work to extend the idea of care as a moral behaviour from the context of private relationships to the public sphere (Robinson 31). Robinson (2011) advances a critical reformulation of these works, emphasizing the need to bring to light the role that power relations play in shaping the distribution of care in concrete social contexts: "The critical lens of care ethics exposes the ways in which dominant norms and discourses sustain existing power relations that lead to inequalities in the way societies determine how and on what bases care will be given and received" (31).

2.4.1 RELATIONALITY AND HUMAN SECURITY

Along these lines, Robinson argues that mainstream human security policies tend to reproduce asymmetrical power relations are based solidaristic and cosmopolitan ethical frameworks such as human rights. Two problems arise from this. Firstly, this type of ethics focuses on

individuals as self-sufficient and atomistic subjects and thereby preclude considerations about how relations based on, e.g., gender, race, and class shape specific forms of insecurity (50). Secondly, this type of ethical framework gives primacy to solutions enforceable through state power, hence naturalizing the way state power affects households and communities (50).

Contrarily, from the point of view of the ethics of care, *relationality* should constitute the cornerstone of decision-making. Although international normative frameworks such as human rights conventions have their merits, individuals can only be properly understood - and their needs fulfilled – if the "human" can be seen within the social context of their lived experience:

> In security terms, it means that we cannot simply look at entities—individuals, societies, states—as if they are preformed and autonomous. Individuals exist in relation to other individuals and groups; these relations are subject to change and are saturated with different forms and levels of power. To consider, and seek to address, an individual's security, we must understand the relational context (Robinson 55).

This echoes decades of feminist work on human security, which argue that the "human" only exists within "structural positions" such as gender, race, ethnicity, religion, age, and sexual orientation (Peterson 2010; Tripp 2013; Marhia 2013). According to Robinson (2011), this focus on relationality disrupts the narrow and dichotomous view of the referent of security as either state or the individual (54). Instead, it focuses on how conceptions and practices of security tackle relationality (54). Therefore, it fits neatly with a narrative approach that aims at uncovering not only referents of security but how they are order or represented.

This is, however, not to say that the point of ethics of care – at least as it will be used in this thesis – aims at making normative statements about what is right and what is wrong in terms of security practices. It does advance an idea of right and wrong, but insofar as it represents a point of departure to explain how relationality can be overlooked and the effects produced by its erasure. To be more precise, relationality acquires relevance as relations of gender, race, and class shape the distribution of care – i.e., the process through which needs are heard and fulfilled - which enables or constrains how (in)security is experienced. Consequently, different meanings of security and, by the same token, the effects of different security practices can be understood through the distribution of care and responsibility which contributes to creating, maintaining, or mitigating insecurities for actors at all levels – i.e., nationally, internationally, and globally (Robinson 55). Hence, focus on relationality is intent on illuminating the contexts and mechanisms preventing care to take place.

Regarding the GGE on LAWS, this implies that ethical claims invoking human rights or 'humanitarian' discourses within arms control needs to be assessed in terms of the extent to which they constrain or enable considerations about specific forms of insecurity rooted on gendered and racialized power relations and on what terms.

Furthermore, Robinson (2011) argues that power relations tend to shape the distribution of care in dichotomic terms, such as public/private, and masculine/feminine (55). In this thesis, I will draw on this conceptualization of public/private to explain how narratives of security construct the fields of security and arms control through this gendered binary. This is not unique to Robinson's theory but has long been a major concern for feminist IR scholars both in and beyond the field of security, which point out how dominant realist and neorealist concepts of IR construct international politics through this mechanism (Blanchard 2011). For that reason, I will also supplement Robinson's conceptualization of the public/private with additional feminist insights on gender in IR.

2.4.2 FEMININIZATION OF CARE AND THE PUBLIC/PRIVATE DIVIDE

While the social reproduction of labour – and, specifically, responsibilities associated with care – are often overlooked in international relations as a 'soft' issue, Robinson maintains that the devaluation of care work as a 'feminine' responsibility and the imagined divide between the public and private spheres constitute a cornerstone of current approaches to human security (35).

Looking at the public/private division as a dichotomy based on a feminine/masculine binary entails the use of gender as an analytical category. According to Peterson (2010), gender analysis can follow two models – i.e., empirical and analytical. Described superficially, the former relies on a binary perception of biological sex as a variable to study the differentiated impacts of political practices on men and women (18). Meanwhile, the latter refers to "a signifying system of masculine/feminine differentiations that constitutes a governing code" (Peterson 18). As a system of differentiation, gender has been historically produced by the naturalization of sex difference in binary terms, accompanied by the attribution of essentialized characteristics to masculinity and femininity in hierarchical terms - qualities associated with masculinity are valued and qualities associated with femininity are devalued (Peterson 18). As a governing code, the differentiation of masculine and feminine in these terms is a set of historically institutionalized practices that enables the naturalization and justification of the subjection of feminized actors:

Understanding gender analytically then generates a crucial and transformative feminist insight: the (symbolic, discursive) cultural privileging of that which is identified with masculinity is key to naturalizing the (symbolic, discursive, cultural, corporeal, material, economic) power relations that constitute multiple forms of subjection" (Peterson 18).

The gender code historically constructed the archetypical 'masculine' as characterized by reason, agency, control, and objectivity, and stigmatizes the 'feminine' as characterized by emotion, passivity, uncertainty, and subjectivity (Peterson 2010; Tickner 1992:8; True, 2018:4; Hooper 1998:29)[2].

Robinson's argument strongly aligns with this analytical model. According to Robinson, seventeenth-century enlightenment philosophers depicted all men as equal in their ability to reason and therefore equal in rights but excluded women from this idea of equality. Hence, as men were given increasingly more space in the public life, the patriarchal rule remained unchallenged within the family life. Early liberalism, in this sense, established a discursive fault line between private/family life and public/political life, which came to constitute an essential feature of the liberal order (34). Women's rights might have been increasingly institutionalized, but the association between women and care work and the association of (feminized) care work with the private sphere remains central to the contemporary liberal order.

Because care has been constructed as a feminine responsibility, care work is largely devalued as a part of public life. At the same time, the very social norms underlying this phenomenon also legitimize the use of violence. If care is constructed as a natural feminine attribute, violence is portrayed as an inherently male one. As Tripp (2013) argues, "violence is both gendered and gendering: it is one of the sites where culturally and historically specific understandings of gender as a power relationship are reproduced" (16). This is evidenced, for example, by gendered binaries underpinning security discourses in which "familiar feminine constructions of embodiment, emotion, and dependence are set against hegemonic masculine

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[2] It is important to emphasize that this is not to say that these characteristics neatly correspond to the 'real' personalities of men and women, but to a culturally constructed ideal (Tickner 1992:6). As Hooper points out, "rather than men generally displaying a stable set of traits that are then more highly valued (an inherent essentialist position because of the presumed stability of the 'masculine' qualities), it is more likely that qualities that are valued as power enhancing get defined as masculine and hence are associated with men" (32). Moreover, it is also important to acknowledge that versions of masculine and feminine ideals change across, e.g., time, culture, and social class. Instead of masculinity, Hooper (1998) – for example – proposes to speak of masculinities, which can also help highlight how subordinate masculinities are devalued in relation to hegemonic forms of masculinity and how that affects international politics (32). However, for the purposes of this thesis, which is to uncover the gendered rationale of a particular, dominant security discourse mainly constructed by Western IR scholars, the idea of masculinism advanced here remains valuable.

characteristics associated with rationality, autonomy, and certain forms of militarized, state-sanctioned violence" (Robinson 34). Thus, the way care is distributed across the private/public division in terms of security also informs on what terms different forms of violence are perceived, enabled, or constrained.

Though arriving at the same conclusions as Robinson, other feminist scholars have argued that the public/private split according to the sexual reproduction of labour can already be identified in foundational texts of Western philosophy which predate and have heavily influenced enlightenment thought. Grant (1991), for example, contends that this structure dates to the emergence of the Greek *polis*, which has been a conceptual model for the modern nation-state. The formation of the polis was marked by the transition from social organizations based on kinship to male-led households in which women were given care duties and men occupied the position of citizens (11). Classical works that shaped Greek democracy are filled with representations and justifications of this dynamic. One example is *Phaedo*, in which Socrates famously said that "the private sphere of women and the family had nothing to do with the public sphere of the Man and the intellect" (12). Grant (1991) argues that the same logics pervades seminal books such as Plato's *Republic* and Thucydides' *Peloponnesian Wars* (13).

This perception of the private woman and the public man has been closely linked to the idea of public and private morality, as discursively confining 'woman' to the private sphere exalted 'man' to the position of responsible moral agents in the political space (Grant 12). Grant (1991) further suggests that "this distinction dangerously implies that private and domestic morality is different in kind from and works at a level inferior to that of public choice" (13). This rationale enabled the state to naturalize a moral fault line between the public life of the state and the interpersonal life of the individual (13). Moreover, public morality has been intertwined with justifying the use of violence:

> The male role of the warrior is the strongest underpinning of authority implicit in the image of sovereign man. Man is the rational, choice making citizen; but the power of the image of sovereign man comes from his ability to legitimate violence. Sovereign man has the power to separate public morality from private morality (Grant 18).

Furthermore, many feminist scholars point to the relation between the public/private divide and the foundations of international relations theory. They contend that, as this logic seeped into modern political philosophy, it eventually became a defining feature of realist and neorealist accounts of the main pillars of IR, such as the concepts of sovereignty and the security dilemma. Concerning the former, the image of the autonomous, rational, public man is widely considered the symbolic archetype upon which state sovereignty has been built (Grant

18; Tickner 1992: 6; Tickner 2018:23; True 36). For example, Hans Morgenthau's ideal of political actor, personified in the 'political man' is strongly based on two overlapping characters: the Greek citizen-warrior and on Machiavelli's *Virtu* or 'manly activity'. For Machiavelli, *Virtu* is the set of desirable qualities for a (political) man - autonomy, insight, effectiveness, and courage - and is conceptually opposed to notion of the Roman goddess *Fortuna*, who is associated with capriciousness and unpredictability (Tickner 1992:38). Similarly, for Morgenthau, the 'political man' is rational, objective, and unemotional (Tickner 1992:39).

Turning to the latter, Grant (1991) argues that the security dilemma is the point where the "distinction between private morality and public action was duplicated and transmitted into international relations" (14). The point here is that this division is considered essential for the legitimization of war according to the dictates of public morality – which demand action toward the security of the state – to detriment of the private, feminized morality of avoiding the negative domestic consequences of organized violence (Grant 16).

It can be argued that (neo)realism has come a long way since the Greeks, Machiavelli, and the Enlightenment. Yet, the realist perception of the security dilemma is mirrored in the Hobbesian image of war of everyman against everyman. This has meant that in the anarchical structure of the international arena, states must rely on their own resources to survive (Tickner 46). Morgenthau has prescribed that the security of the state in this scenario is better ensured through the maximization of power – primarily in terms of military capabilities, whereas Kenneth Waltz argued for a more nuanced strategy based on the principle of self-help, which means avoiding dependence and build defence capabilities (Tickner 1992:32). While neorealists like Waltz have moved away from Morgenthau's focus on single actors and toward a systemic explanation of the international order, many of Waltz's principles remain bound with the classical imagery and tend to reproduce the (a)morality of the public sphere as conditioned and conditional upon by the sovereign state's need to survive (Tickner 1992:31; Lundborg 2018).

The foundational history of international relations is not a consideration that belongs in the past. Rather, it is an integral aspect of evaluating current security practices, as they remain strongly shaped the (neo)realist tradition. As Elshtain (1987), texts like Thucydides, Machiavelli, and Hobbes form part of the *"professionalized IR discourse"* and thus pervade the worldview of scholars and practitioners alike (89).

3 THE CONVENTION ON CERTAIN CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS AND THE WORK OF THE GROUP OF GOVERNMENTAL EXPERTS ON EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES IN THE AREA OF LAWS

Conventional weapons are weapons that fall outside the definition of weapons of mass destruction. Under the existing international law, states are entitled to develop, deploy, and use the weapons of their choice, provided that they comply with the principles established by the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and its additional protocols (UNODA, "Conventional Arms"), which form the basis of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). Particularly, Rule 70 of the 1977 Amended Protocol I prohibit means of warfare that "cause superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering". Three other principles applicable to the use of weapons complement Rule 70: the principle of distinction between civilians and combatants (only combatants are considered legitimate targets), the principle of proportionality (the impact of an attack on civilians must not be disproportional to the military advantage anticipated), and the principle of feasible precautions in attack (the risk of incidental loss of civilian life must be minimized) (ICRC, "IHL database").

Notwithstanding, continuous experience with armed conflict has evidenced the need to further regulate specific types of weapons. In 1980, the *Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects* (CCW)*,* also known as the Inhumane Weapons Convention*.* As its title suggests, the CCW aims at either prohibiting or restricting the use of weapons proved to extrapolate what might be considered a legitimate use of force according to IHL principles. However, besides minimizing harm to civilians, the Convention's preamble highlights the goal to contribute to the continuing development of the international law applicable to armed conflict and facilitating progress toward general and complete disarmament (CCW, preamble).

Conceived as a framework convention, the CCW is an open structure into which new protocols can be incorporated. While its main document lays down its unifying principles and the regime for negotiation and adoption of new protocols, each of its protocols offers substantive provisions for a specific type of weapon. At present, the CCW comprehends five protocols adopted between 1980 and 2006, which cover non-detectable fragments, landmines, incendiary weapons, blinding laser weapons, and the clearance of explosive remnants of war.

To date, the CCW has been ratified by 125 High Contracting Parties (UNODA, "High-Contracting Parties"), which meet annually to discuss the operation and implementation of the Convention, including by considering the work done by its ongoing Groups of Governmental

Experts (UNODA, "Meetings and Documents"). Moreover, every five years, the CCW conducts a Review Conference with the purpose of "review[ing] the scope and operation" of the Convention. If issues are flagged in annual meetings in relation to existing protocols or possible new protocols, the Review Conference may negotiate and adopt amendments or new protocols.

In 2013, the MHCP decided to establish an informal GGE to "discuss the questions related to emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems, in the context of the objectives and purposes of the Convention". The group was formalized in 2016, when the Fifth Review Conference invested it with the mandate "to explore and agree on possible recommendations on options related to emerging technologies in the area of LAWS" (UNODA, "Background on LAWS"). It was also determined, in line with CCW practice, that the GGE shall "conduct its work and adopt its report by consensus which shall be submitted to the Meeting of the High Contracting Parties" (CCW 2016).

Since then, the GGE has organized its agenda according to five matters pertaining to emerging technologies in the area of LAWS: potential challenges posed by LAWS; characterization of systems under consideration; aspects of human-machine interaction; review of potential military applications; and possible options for addressing the humanitarian and security challenges posed by LAWS. In other words, the Group discusses the technical aspects of autonomy, aspects pertaining to the military utility of the weapons and humanitarian concerns. Discussion of these topics is followed by the consideration of appropriate policy options and the preparation of the Group's report.

The length of each annual meeting is determined according to the Group's own recommendations, and has varied from three days in 2013 to twenty days in 2021. While sessions of the meetings are reserved for the substantive discussion of these agenda items, the rest of a year's sessions are allocated for the elaboration of the Group's report, to be submitted to the consideration of the next meeting of High Contracting Parties or Review Conference.

The most significant outcome of the GGE has been the recommendation of eleven *guiding principles*, which were confirmed and adopted by the 2019 Meeting of High Contracting Parties. The principles lay down and solidify the points of consensus that the Group was able to reach within the previous six years of deliberations and, as such, constitute the basis not only for further discussions but, ultimately, for a future normative and operational framework.

In summary, the principles solidify basic understandings of the relation between LAWS and international norms. They establish, for example, that IHL fully applies to these

technologies (principle *a*); that humans remain responsible for the use of autonomy in weapons systems, since machines cannot have legal personality and thus be responsible for violations of international law (*b*); and that the interaction between a human developer or operator and the weapons system must ensure that the weapon system can be used in compliance with the principles of international law (*c*). Other principles recognize the need to incorporate risk assessment and mitigation throughout the lifecycle of the weapon system – i.e., design, development, testing, and deployment (*g* and *f*). Moreover, two principles refer to the idea that consideration should be given to positive aspects of autonomous technologies, including how they may uphold compliance with IHL principles (h) and be used for peaceful purposes (j). Lastly, principle (k) affirms that the CCW is the appropriate framework to deal with emerging technologies in the area of LAWS, emphasizing that the Convention's purposes and objectives "seek to strike a balance between military necessity and humanitarian considerations (CCW/MSP/2019/9).

Notwithstanding, the guiding principles were adopted "without prejudice to further discussion" and can be interpreted very differently by delegations. In this light, the Chairperson tasked with directing the Group's work and elaborating the Group's report in 2021, encouraged states to submit a written document clarifying how they understand each guiding principle. Therefore, despite representing an important step toward a future normative framework, the guiding principles fall short of indicating that consensus around such a framework will be possible in the near future. In fact, for the first time since conversations began, the Group has failed to submit a report to the Sixth Review Conference due to a significant deadlock over a series of issues.

4 METHOD

In this section, I will operationalize Wibben's narrative approach, explaining how I intend to apply it to the working structure of the GGE's discussion. I will then account for my data and my choice of case study, as well as its generalisability and the process of data collection.

4.1 NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

As presented above, the basic claim of a narrative approach is that humans make sense of the world through narrative processes of interpretation and representation, which organizes experience into meaning (Wibben 44). Holding the mandate to elaborate a report containing consensus recommendations to be considered by the High Contracting Parties, the GGE must construct a shared understanding of the issue at hand, which will shape policy options. Put into terminology of narrative analysis, states must construct a shared process of interpretation and

representation of the issue. This task can thus be seen as driving states to create a 'collective narrative' to be presented at the Sixth Review Conference. In this context, the process of creating one narrative means excluding alternative narratives and, with them, alternative modes of representation.

I then sought to outline narrative frames advanced by pro-ban and ban-resisting actors as contrasting narratives through which states attempt to shape the Group's collective narrative. Thus, besides uncovering what meanings of security are being advanced through narratives, I expand Wibben's approach to look at the GGE's discussion as a process of an active and explicit dispute over the borders of the 'official' narrative to emerge in the report. In other words, I detail the process through which ban-resisting narratives attempt to exclude elements of pro-ban narratives from the Group's 'collective' narrative. Ultimately, the interaction between pro-ban and ban-resisting narratives can also be seen as shaping the ban-resisting narrative insofar as it forces ban-resisting actors to reflect and justify their positions, consequently driving them to maintain the coherence of their narrative. This is meant to show that the meaning of ethics in arms control is shaped not only by meanings of security but, in the GGE, these meanings are produced and negotiated through a debate within the specific context of arms control.

Moreover, following Wibben's narrative approach, a crucial methodological consideration is that the process of identifying and outlining narratives must not attempt to force the boundaries of one pre-conceived narrative 'form', as an attempt to do so would be biased (see section 2.2.2). Yet, because the GGE's meetings are conducted in a 'debate format', states do not always deliver single and pre-prepared statements. Instead, pre-prepared statements are delivered alongside extemporaneous statements. This produces not one coherent statement, but a series of statements that are not textually connected.

Thus, to be able to 'find' a 'fabula' of security in the collection of statements made by each delegation and put them against each other in a comparative way, it was necessary to sort through these statements with the key elements of possible security 'fabulas' in mind. Specifically, I started by identifying what were the main issues being described concerning the eventual development of LAWS in each narrative, using both securitisation theory and Wibben's account of a security narrative. This led me to concentrate on the extent to which the potential consequences of LAWS were being framed as a threat, how referents and providers of security were being represented in relation to the threat and to each other. I also looked for the key topics in the discussion in which delegations attempted to reduce the frames of the 'collective narrative', such as discussions about expanding the scope of the CCW beyond the

norms of IHL and discussions on social bias. In this sense, I acknowledge that this has been an interpretative exercise and that, as a researcher, I also participate in the construction of these narratives.

4.2 DATA

Analysis of the narratives advanced at the GGE on LAWS is possible through primary data collection, as recordings of the Group's meetings are available on the UN's WebTV[3]. Through these recordings, debates can be followed first-hand.

Although the GGE has met annually since its establishment in 2014, it was only after the COVID-19 pandemic that the GGE's meetings started being televised and their recordings published. Additionally, despite resuming the meetings on 7 March 2022, the meeting was disrupted by events following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Therefore, given that recordings from the latest meeting, as well as earlier meetings, are unavailable, my dataset will primarily comprehend the arguments and positions articulated in 2021.

I have approached the data by watching the available meeting recordings and transcribing the relevant moments of intervention. I considered relevant all interventions made by Israel and Palestine (which is the case study I selected), as well as the interventions made by third countries to which Israel and Palestine refer in formulating their own arguments.

Besides the available recordings of the meetings, I will also include the 'working papers' that each of the selected delegations/coalitions submitted in both 2020 and 2021. In these working papers, each country/coalition outlines their position and the policy recommendations they defend during the meetings. As it is very common for delegations to refer to working papers during the meetings, these documents make a good basis to complement attempts to explore meanings underexplained within the debates.

4.3 CASE STUDY

The number of contributions made by participants in each GGE meeting is considerably high (Bode 2019). In 2021, the GGE on LAWS have conducted 38 meetings between August and December, with each meeting ranging from 2:30 to 3:00 hours. Therefore, I chose to limit the scope of my analysis to the narratives advanced by one actor on each side.

I have chosen to focus on Palestine as an example of pro-ban narrative and Israel as an example of ban-resisting narrative. There are three reasons for this choice. Firstly, while I am taking a constructivist approach and, therefore, my focus is on the ideational aspects of

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[3] https://media.un.org/en/webtv

international security politics, my choice of theory – grounded on Feminist Security Studies -, is driven by the acknowledgement that narratives of security have an impact on the lived experiences of vulnerable populations.

From this angle, the Israeli-Palestine conflict provides a contextual standpoint to investigate how meanings of security in armed conflict shape what is considered ethical. Israel is one of the leading states in research and development of military AI, the world's second largest exporter of armed drones (Cohen, 2018), and one of the few to have already developed a rudimentary version of LAWS: *Raphael's Sentry Tech*'s gun, a stationary gun that can automatically detect, track, and potentially engage targets, which is stationed at the Gaza strip (Boulanin and Verbruggen 2017). Palestinians, of course, have been in the other end of an Israeli robotic weapon since Israel began using drones to launch attacks during the second intifada, in 2000 (Currier and Moltke 2016). This is, therefore, a very concrete scenario in which the eventual development and deployment of LAWS will produce salient consequences. Hence, I find it an opportune grounding point to showcase the roots and envision the implications of these narratives.

Secondly, my case selection is information-oriented, as I sought to "maximize the utility of information" based on the expectations I had about their content (Flyvbjerg 2006:231). To begin with, due to previous exposure to the data, I was already aware that Palestine was spoke from the position of a particularly vulnerable population. Additionally, because of the scenario described above, Israel-Palestine constitute a "most likely" case to represent the opposite narratives in their strongest forms. The assumption contained in my problem formulation is that the impasse regarding ethics in the GGE might stem from the persistence of a (neo)realist framework of security which favours the military needs of powerful states, causing more rather than less insecurity to vulnerable populations. In that sense, Israel's position as a leading figure in research and development of laws, as well as underlying 'security' issues with Palestine would suggest that their narratives were very likely to entrench (neo)realist views of security in an ethical discourse. This would then allow me to better uncover contrasting meanings of security.

Finally, Israel and Palestine provide a useful case study due to the volume of their contributions within the GGE. Israel has been one of the most vocal ban-resisting states, participating with frequent and comprehensive interventions during the meetings and submitting working papers ahead of them. In the pro-ban side, Palestine has formed a coalition with ten Southern States, and contributes to the debate with similar constancy.

4.4 GENERALISABILITY

Focusing on Palestine-Israel, the findings of this single study are generalisable to a great extent. This is because discussions at the GGE on LAWS have now lasted eight years. During the debates, it is possible to notice that the actors located in the two 'poles' of the discussion do not create completely original narratives but draw on the narratives that have been produced and reproduced across delegations in that time span. Throughout my analysis, this is made evident by the frequency with Israel bases its interventions on references to the interventions of actors with similar positions or understandings advanced by other delegations in previous years. Regarding Palestine, the partial generalisability of its positions is already implied in the fact that it speaks as part of a coalition of 11 countries. In that sense, the narratives advanced by Israel and Palestine are by no means "extreme" or "atypical" cases (Flyvberg 2006).

That said, it is possible that not all aspects of the Israeli or the Palestinian narrative are universal amongst pro-ban and ban-resisting actors. Nevertheless, the main point of conducting a case study here is not to be able to "describe the symptoms of the problem and how frequently they occur" but to "clarify the deeper causes behind a given problem and its consequences" (Flyvberg 2006:229). Therefore, I do not propose that all pro-ban and anti-ban narratives are identical to Israel's and Palestine's; nuances can be found in other narratives, but Israel and Palestine are good examples of the type of narrative dynamics between pro-ban and ban-resisting actors.

5 ANALYSIS: TWO NARRATIVES OF SECURITY

In this section, I begin by outlining the two narratives of security advanced by Palestine and Israel. At this point, an important feature to recall is that both narratives are aimed at shaping the Group's report. Therefore, at the centre of these narratives is exercise of 'balancing' what can be perceived as the potential risks and benefits of LAWS. While Palestine emphasizes risks, framing LAWS as a threat, Israel emphasizes benefits, re-framing LAWS as a means to achieve security. The first part of this analysis shows that the distribution of weight, favouring either risks or benefits, is underpinned by different meanings of security, which largely determine whether LAWS can be portrayed as ethical or non-ethical.

5.1 THE PALESTINIAN NARRATIVE: FRAMING LAWS AS A THREAT

With the aim of promoting a pre-emptive ban on LAWS, Palestine presents the development of weaponized autonomous technology as a clear and urgent threat. In 2021, the Group of 10's opening statement summarized this position as follows:

The current autonomous weapon systems and the dynamics involved in their implementation already surpasses existing regulations of international law. *This gap between traditional regulations and new technologies continues to widen every day and, therefore, humanity as a whole grows more vulnerable as time goes by. Time is of the essence.*

Artificial intelligence systems, however advanced, are not beyond international law and the *shared responsibility of all nations* to *safeguard human life and dignity* […] Yesterday, many common points were undeniably echoed in the same room. Points that speak about a *safer world*. A world in which *human conflict even in its more severe and painful expression*, *war, remains a human issue and it's not reduced to a code or not algorithm*. […] *a world more secure*; *a world in which the development, manufactured trade, or use of lethal autonomous weapons is completely prohibited* (1ˢᵗ session, 3ʳᵈ meeting)

As LAWS are not yet deployed in armed conflict, time acquires particular significance because it represents the eminent sense of actualization of the threat – i.e., the longer it takes to regulate these weapons, the closer developers get to develop them. Similar remarks were made in each Palestinian/G10 intervention throughout the year. On another occasion, for example, Palestine stated: "Time is of the essence. If nothing is done or we delay progress in this, technological developments in this area would outpace our deliberations. And the window of for action will be closed" (2ⁿᵈ session, 11ᵗʰ meeting).

Therefore, when representing the development of LAWS, Palestine and the G10 tell the story of a "point of no return', after which humanity will be exposed to existential harm. It is then possible to argue that Palestine/G10 engages in a 'securitising move'. As an emerging technology category of military weapon, LAWS do not occupy a clear position in the arms control "security spectrum" (Cooper 2011). This 'securitising move' can thus be understood as an attempt to prevent that they become "run-of-the-mill" (Cooper 2011) technologies.

To a certain extent, the Palestinian securitisation move follows much of what is understood by Wibben as traditional security 'fabula': there is a threat, a referent of security, an agent charged with providing security, and a means to provide security. However, the content of these elements significantly differs from a (neo)realist fabula. Firstly, the typical referent of security – the nation-state – is replaced by the "humanity as a whole" or "human life and dignity". Secondly, the phrase "shared responsibility of all nations" transfers the role of the individual nation-state in providing security to the international society. Lastly, the means of protection, which is often conceived and presented in terms of deploying military force, is presented in the form of a normative framework capable of limiting the use of military force.

For the sake of accuracy, I would also argue that despite the sense of existential threat, there is also another element to this narrative that transcends the idea of security as survival. References to human dignity and the reduction of the human to an algorithm, for example, could be seen as conveying not only the idea of death and bodily integrity but also the idea that LAWS threaten a deeper value – a core component of the principle of human dignity in International Human Rights Law refers to "the right to not be treated merely as a means to other people's ends" (Birnbacher 2016) or as, Rosert and Sauer (2019) put it, to be treated as an object. This is then a matter of securing the intrinsic value of human life. This is a concern about the fact that if weapons are fully autonomous, they will be making life and death decisions based on an abstract set of data - zeros and ones. In this sense, a machine has no compassion or understanding for the value of human life (Birnbacher 2016).

In any case, the way that the elements of story are ordered in this statement point to a 'meaning of security' beyond – and opposed to – traditional security narratives. Security is not framed in terms of a nation-state's prerogative to ensure its own survival but as a collective duty to safeguard human lives throughout state boundaries. Although the state – as part of the international society – figures as a provider of security, achieving security is being portrayed as ensuring protection *from* the state in its pursuit of increased military capabilities, which is seen in (neo)realist security frameworks as the quintessential state interest.

Notwithstanding, the ordering of this story is complicated in throughout the interventions made by Palestine/G10. When discussing specific risks posed by LAWS, Palestine presents LAWS as a moral threat which ultimately translates into a physical or existential threat:

> These weapon systems raised three main ethical concerns: The *loss of human dignity and the process of using force; the loss of human agency, and decisions to use force and the erosion of moral responsibility for these decisions* […] they further i*ncrease the physical and psychological distance of humans from the specific time and place of force applicatio*n, thus increasing existing asymmetries and *reducing the threshold for the use of force*. Furthermore, the development of autonomous weapon systems could change the current strategic landscape and lead to an *arms race* increasing *existing strategic inequalities* and *further eroding international peace, stability, and security*. (2nd session,1st meeting)

In other words, LAWS pose a threat to humanity because it lowers the threshold for the choice of using of force, which is seen both from the interpersonal level – that is, in terms of individual responsibility for taking human life in armed conflict – and from a global level, including the potential for the proliferation of armed conflict. Hence, in a deeper level, the

'problem' is an increased potential for violence provoked by the state's pursuit of military capabilities.

Moreover, while 'humanity' is often used as the referent of security, Palestine strongly focuses on the security of social and global minorities. Firstly, the concern with social minorities often comes across in G10 interventions because, alongside the threshold for the use of force and the proliferation of armed conflict, one of their main considerations about ethics and LAWS refer to algorithm bias in weapons designed to target human 'profiles'. Algorithms are a set of 'rules' through which machines can replicate human cognition based on an initial data training set. If the training data sets are incomplete or skewed, the machine will replicate or even amplify the distortions (Chandler 7). In the 'civilian' sphere, experience with AI has shown that artificial intelligence based on machine learning algorithms often replicate social biases such as gender because they are based on distorted data sets. For example, studies have shown that facial recognition softwares are much less likely to accurately recognize female faces and, in particular, dark-skinned female faces (Chandler 2021:11); others have shown that facial recognition software tended to reproduce stereotypical gender roles by, for example, labelling anyone standing in a kitchen as a woman (Acheson, 2020:12).

When it comes to military or weaponized AI, the concern is that machines designed to target people will make life and death decisions based on potentially flawed or skewed datasets:

> Developers would base their programming on the information available to them and on their own personal experiences. It is therefore highly likely that biases, including gender based or racial biases arising from developers, specific cultural upbringings, would be reflected in any pre-programmed systems. (2nd session, 1st meeting)

> At least in the case of discriminatory systems in the civilian world, victims can in many cases, resort to legal action to overturn unfair decisions or get some form of justice but when it comes to algorithmic bias in war there is no possible justice for someone who has been wrongly targeted with lethal force as a result of algorithmic bias we thus need to be considerably more cautious and give appropriate attention to the risks (1st session, 11th meeting)

Furthermore, because algorithms work by categorizing large amounts of data according to encoded parameters, they necessarily work by reducing the very diverse realities of human bodies to abstractions built upon a handful of selected characteristics. Therefore, as argued in a shared paper put forward by the *Campaign to Stop Killer Robots* and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, beyond the very real potential for misidentification of targets, "there is also the risk that the machine's bias would not be a

mistake at all. It could be deliberately programmed to target people bearing certain "markers" or identities". Palestine makes a very similar case in the GGE:

> No one can deny that there may be some beneficial applications of AWS, but that is not the point. […] The point is: how can we be sure that by, allowing these technologies, we would not be opening Pandora's box and inadvertently making them available for harmful uses? After all, such systems do not require hard-to-obtain raw materials to develop and could quickly become mass produced. We can imagine scenarios where these technologies fall in the hands of racist or fascist regimes, terrorists, warlords, are used with criminal intentions to wipe out a particular ethnic group, commit genocide or kill all people of a certain height or hair colour, for example. These are characteristics that could easily be programmed into an algorithm (1st session, 5th meeting)

Therefore, 'humanity' does not remain a universalized and abstract concept throughout anti-ban narratives. Rather, Palestine narrates the threat posed by LAWS through the imaginable security outcomes to people positioned in different power relations – i.e., the potential for violence that the increase circulation of this type of weapon will engender. This is a recognition of the fact that the very nature of the technology increases the vulnerability of disadvantaged groups. These considerations are well captured by Cockburn's (2004) concept of the *continuum of violence*. As her argument goes, violence can never be seen in isolation, neither from a temporal nor from a spatial perspective. The state's choice to engage in organized violence in the international/public sphere creates is interlinked with the levels of violence within and across its borders. This means, for example, that the militarization of a state heightens the circulation of weapons at all levels and exacerbates the level of interpersonal forms of violence often perpetrated against minorities such as women or sexual minorities (32).

Moreover, global power imbalances are elaborated by Palestine in other interventions which highlight the power dynamics between Global North and Global South:

> An essential element that is of great importance to my delegation - and I'm sure many others - is […] the disproportionate impact that autonomous weapon systems will have on countries and populations of the global South. […] We are aware that our absence in these fora would lead to the framing of disarmament norms to reflect mainly the views of powerful, highly militarized states, often to the detriment of our priorities and efforts to protect our civilian populations and the most vulnerable from further harm. We are also acutely aware of our histories, often tainted by the bitter legacies of colonialism, the scars of war, and marked *interalia* by a pattern of deployments and testing of experimental weapons technologies against our populations. We cannot but extrapolate that, in all probability, the global South is where autonomous weapon systems will be initially tested and used by the developers of these systems (1st session, 5th meeting)

In this quote, Palestine represents LAWS as a threat to Southern countries and populations based on the power imbalance between Global North and "powerful, highly militarized states", to which ownership of LAWS is attributed. In other words, the framing of LAWS as a threat is directly linked to the historical, social, and economic context that shape the experience of war and insecurity by Southern populations. Southern countries and populations thus figure as the disadvantaged portion of humanity made particularly vulnerable by the development and future use of LAWS.

In this sense, to some extent, the argument could be made that the Southern nation-state is presented as a referent of security, since identifying 'our populations' is equivalent to demarcating the boundaries of the nation-state; if so, the meaning of security could be seen as protecting the nation-state from an external threat to its existence, in the manner of traditional security frameworks (Wibben 67). However, another indicator of meaning in the narrative is how the narrator allocates time; the more attention is paid to an element of the narrative, the more they shape the vision expressed in the fabula (Wibben 60). Palestine more often tells this story as an external narrator, such as in the previously discussed interventions in which the referents of security are either pointed in the third person ("humanity as a whole" or "a particular ethnic group") or are implied ("increasing existing strategic inequalities"). Thus, references to the Global South and the vulnerability of Southern populations are better seen in the context of fears of increasing human vulnerability through enabling a lower threshold for the use of force. From this standpoint, what is being threatened is not the state's security but primarily human life throughout the international system. While Palestine might have an interest in its survival as a national collective, what is being emphasized in this narrative is the possibility that LAWS will enable more wars and more instability, which would affect humanity as a whole but would disproportionately affect populations that are already vulnerable to violence.

Furthermore, when providing inputs to the text of the Group's report, Palestine/G10 – has been consistently focused on downplaying benefits associated with LAWS and emphasizing these risks. In its own national capacity, Palestine stated that "focusing on the beneficial applications of autonomous weapons misses the point that the potential catastrophic harms overwhelmingly outweigh them and will be nearly impossible to completely avoid" (1st session, 5th meeting). They have attempted to establish a collective narrative that clearly reflects this perceived imbalance between risks and benefits:

Our group is also concerned by the insistence on highlighting possible potential and advantages of these weapons to be used in up in upholding compliance with international law. *There is no consensus on these potential advantages. These potential advantages are outweighed by risks and challenges, including the possible perpetuation or amplification of social biases*, including on the basis of gender and race (3rd session, 1st meeting)

As I will show in the next section, this stands in stark contrast with Israel's narrative, which seeks to highlight benefits and minimize the relevance of risks.

5.2 THE ISRAELI NARRATIVE: RE-FRAMING LAWS AS A MEANS TO ACHIEVE SECURITY

Anti-ban narratives are characterized by a widely positive outlook on technological developments in the area of LAWS. As the tale goes, these technologies are complex, but it is possible to understand and manage the challenges they pose. Significant knowledge has been already accumulated and points to their potential to humanize the practice of warfighting. In terms of constructing a narrative of security, this means that anti-ban states represent the use of LAWS not as a threat but as conducive to more security.

Anti-ban states such as the USA, Russia, India, and Israel all emphasize the idea that highly automated weapons may increase the precision of attacks, thereby decreasing the number of unintended civilian deaths in a given conflict. India and Israel tend to elaborate little on *how* LAWS bring humanitarian benefits; they limit themselves to endorsing other delegations' statements on the subject and generally affirming, for example, that "autonomy in critical functions of weapon systems impart more precision and accuracy and would avoid human errors" (India, 1st session, 1st meeting).

Conversely, the USA has frequently submitted working papers on these benefits and often delivers lengthy statements highlighting specific beneficial uses of LAWS. In their 2019 working paper, for example, the USA argues that automation assists humans in dealing with "the fog of war": "The facts may be difficult to discern due to the efforts by the adversary to deceive as well as the stress and chaos accompanying combat operations, including the constant threat of attack by the adversary" (USA, "implementing", 4). Along these lines, during the 2021 sessions, the USA's delegates often refer to decision-making in the battlefield:

"New technologies can create humanitarian benefits like increasing a commander's awareness of civilians on the battlefield, improving the commander's ability to assess the risk of collateral damage, improving precision and accuracy of weapons, and automatically disabling munitions if they miss their targets" (1st session, 3rd meeting).

Likewise, according to Russia, fully autonomous weapons systems showed more strategic and humanitarian advantages than autonomous systems that still depended on a human

operator to control the machine in real-time because they take human emotions out of the equation:

> "This is connected with the fact that, *in addition to their technological advantages, accuracy, speed, effectiveness...* these reduce the *risk of the human factor*. In particular, operator error connected with the *psychological situation...* With religious, moral, and other issues. And in this way, they reduce the probability of an unintentional strike against the civilian population" (1st session, 4th meeting).

Among these benefits, besides minimizing collateral damage, benefits to national defence and national security are often invoked, with frequent allusions to "combatting terrorism", "destroying military objectives", and "protecting and defending military objects" (4th meeting, 1st session).

Drawing on these narratives, Israel delivers an opening statement in 2021 which targets calls for a legally binding instrument banning LAWS. The statement, evoking a sense of positive progress contrary to the G10's sense of urgency, begins by presenting the Group's work as a shared journey toward knowledge, with a history and a way forward:

> At the outset, […] it is time for reflection on what was done thus far and what lies ahead. Seven years ago, we began a conversation on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems. Looking back, there is much that we have achieved […]. The GGE meetings thus far have helped promote a greater understanding of the various aspects of the issues of laws.

Notwithstanding, in Israel's view, this path is still defined by a persistent lack of understanding of these emerging technologies:

> *At the same time, our discussions illustrated, unsurprisingly, that it is not easy to discuss an emerging technology which is still in its nascent phases.* Reaching wide-ranging conclusions at this stage would be insufficiently informed and something we should avoid.
>
> […] We also learn that *technology is always changing and advancing;* the state of technology in 2014 when we began this discussion is different from the state of technology in 2021. *It is safe to assume that technology will keep changing going forward. And this requires us to be modest in our assumptions and predictions today.*

As evidenced in this excerpt, the idea is that although technology changes with time, there is a 'truth' yet to be reached on LAWS, which is possible if the Group focuses on the appropriate epistemological framework – i.e., offered by those with military and technological expertise. Because it is associated with a call for modesty, time is not presented through the idea of urgency in reaching understanding and solving the issue at hand. Therefore, the ongoing research on the development of LAWS is not associated with danger. Rather, the fact that

technology continues to develop warrants restraint and disavows immediate action; the word "advancing", in context, also suggests that development is associated with "progress" and will thus bring positive change instead of exacerbating vulnerabilities.

The rest of the statement clearly shows that the narrative is leading to the articulation of a response to the calls for a new legally binding instrument, as advanced by pro-ban states. Here, the idea of flawed or insufficient knowledge – as well as the plea for restraint – figures as a direct opposition to further regulations.

> One of them concerns additional outcomes that could be potentially reached in this Forum. In this regard, it is Israel's position that *existing IHL suffices in regulating the use of any future weapon system* with autonomous capabilities, and that there is *no need for a new, legally binding instrument. Due to these circumstances, we observed that there is a need to continue with an incremental and informed process that will allow us to deepen our understanding and reflect on the aspects mentioned thus far* […]

Followingly, Israel links the idea of premature restrictions to a potential loss in terms of the benefits that emerging technologies:

> Several delegations express their views suggesting that analysis of the issue of LAWS should also relate to the potential of such systems to reduce risks of unintended consequences. As we mentioned before, in Israel's view, *it is important to note that besides the potential challenges that may be associated with laws, there are also potential military and humanitarian advantages, such as better precision and targeting, minimizing collateral damage, and reduced risk to civilians*. We believe that those potential implications of LAWS should be further considered and *caution us from prohibiting something that could actually save lives*. For this reason, *technology should not be demonized nor simplistically labelled as beneficial or detrimental*.

In other words, further regulation is associated with the loss of lifesaving opportunities (by "prohibit[ing] something that can actually save lives"). What is more, claiming that technology should not be "labelled beneficial or detrimental", Israel attempts to attribute a sense of neutrality to LAWS, which is further solidified through their presentation of the relationship between humans and machines:

> In line with the views expressed by other delegations, we believe human judgement to be an integral part of any process regarding emerging Technologies in the areas of LAWS and that it should be applied during their life cycle as LAWS would be designed and programmed by humans they will operate as another means to effectuate the intention of commanders and operators. Therefore, human beings will always be responsible for the use of laws accordingly.

The point being made is that automation is nothing but a 'channel' for human intent, which can be programmed anywhere in a weapon's life cycle and therefore dispense with real-time human control. In other words, LAWS are just like any other weapon – neutral tools that gain value according to how they are used by humans. That being the case, the only difference between LAWS and any other weapon would be that they bring operational and humanitarian benefits that 'dumb' (as opposed to intelligent) weapons do not, thereby 'actually saving lives'.

In this light, Israel invariably emphasizes that decisions regarding a potential regulatory framework for LAWS should be based on a balance between positive and negative aspects of automation in weapons systems. In the introduction to their written submission on the guiding principles, what they choose to emphasize is that "in Israel's view, it is important to be aware that besides the potential risks that may be associated with LAWS, there are also operational advantages to the use of LAWS as well as clear advantages from the humanitarian perspective" (Permanent Mission of Israel, "Considerations", 1).

At the 'text level' of this narrative, Israel attempts to paint LAWS as a neutral tool and refer to balancing positive and negative aspects. However, zooming out and refocusing the analytical lenses at the 'story level', it becomes evident that the Israeli representation of the development of weaponized technology is a positive one and attempts to re-frame LAWS as a non-threat. Once again, the ordering of a story's time is a useful tool to assess the fabula; the more attention is paid to an element of the narrative, the more they shape the vision expressed in the fabula (Wibben 60). In their opening statement, they refer both to the idea that it might pose risks and that it might present benefits – e.g., contribute to successful military strategy with minimized loss of life in the process. Nevertheless, the 'challenges' – or negative aspects – are downplayed, and attention goes to elaborating on how LAWS can be used toward the common good – i.e., 'saving' civilian lives. Collecting all statements made by Israel in the 40 meetings carried out by the GGE in 2021, no elaboration on potential risks can be found and any mention of risks is linked to the need to balance them with – and therefore pay attention to – benefits.

Israel has actively participated in discussions on balancing risks and benefits within the Group's report, consistently joining India, the USA, and Russia in their calls to downplay negative consequences. India, for example, frequently argues that a framework for LAWS cannot be focused on the potential risks of automation, but balance risks and benefits – as articulated in the following:

> When we are discussing all aspects of GGE on emerging technologies in the context of LAWS, we are not here only for a *bashing* of the LAWS. We also

have to look at the potential benefits, and my delegation on many occasions has expressed its position about the benefits or the potential benefit that the lethal autonomous weapon systems and the emerging technologies related to them can bring to us" (2nd session, 6th meeting).

In the same occasion, the Indian delegation criticized the introductory part of the Chair's report, which contained four paragraphs and half of them referred to "potential risks and challenges", while none referred to benefits. At that point, a reference to benefits had only been made in a section dedicated to "risk mitigation". The Indian delegate argued:

> I don't think it's a good idea that we only take cognizance of the potential risks and challenges in the beginning and relegate the part of the benefits to the very end or to the risk mitigation site. Benefits are not only related to risk mitigation; they also bring benefits in upholding the international humanitarian law (2nd session, 6th meeting).

Israel fully endorsed this strategy in the construction of the report. For example, during the GGE's 3rd session, in December, Israel strongly opposed to the introductory session of the draft report on the grounds that the section misrepresented the Group's collective perception of LAWS by overemphasizing their potential risks:

> We observed that the paragraph that remain make this part significantly imbalanced, reflecting mostly the positions of a certain group of states. Notably, there are now two paragraphs discussing risks and challenges of laws, and no text acknowledging their potential advantages (3rd session, 7th meeting)

In other occasions, the downplaying of risks involves outright excluding a concern. This can be seen, for example, in Israel's rejection of the argument that LAWS might reinforce and amplify social biases. According to Israel, this possibility should not be considered by the Group in the report because the concept of 'social bias' does not belong in an international arms control forum: "We also doubt that the concept of social bias, which emerges from the domestic context, is suitable to the CCW context" (3rd session, 6th meeting). I will elaborate on the gendered roots and effects of this discussion on gender bias at a later stage.

The state as a referent and provider of security

From the point of view of securitization theory, the Israeli narrative does not seem to convey a narrative of security - it is not built around the articulation of a threat and therefore it cannot represent a securitizing move. On the contrary, it can only be seen as resisting a securitizing move. However, as suggested by Wibben, "there might be a plot of narration, focused on the narrator, rather than on the reader's assumed desire for a clearly structured fabula" (Wibben 52). I propose here that it is possible to uncover a narrative of security underneath which does

not only resist a securitization move but also reveals underpinning assumptions about what security is and how it should be achieved.

If we follow Hynek's (2018a) understanding, the focus on better protecting civilians can be seen in the context of shifting the "force of compassion" from the state to the individual, with human security occupying a considerable space in decision-making. Here, LAWS are portrayed as beneficial because they can 'save human lives' in the outbreak of armed conflict. The individual would then be a referent of security and balancing risks and benefits could be regarded as an objective, rational calculation of the risks to the individual *versus* the benefits to the individual. However, if we invoke Wibben's point about paying attention to focalization – i.e, the point of view produced by the subject who sees, and the object seen – it is possible to argue that the state is the ultimate referent and provider of security.

Attention to Focalization is, as Wibben explains, an important part of constructing meanings in narratives. To recall the concept, focalization is the point of view through which the narrative is presented, and it is produced through the relationship between "who perceives and what is perceived" (Wibben 48). In Israel's narrative, the state can be seen as both the narrator and the focalizor. This is evidenced by the representation of the benefits of LAWS, which is a story told from the state's perspective and centered on the state's needs, interests, and values in relation to means and modes of warfare. Benefits are listed by Israel as operational (in their written submission) or strategic (in their opening statement) and as humanitarian benefits. From the context of arms control, it is fair to assume that the words "operational" and "strategic" refer to state interests in pursuing security goals. As anti-ban narratives align, this is also evidenced by, for example, Russia's above-mentioned references to "combatting terrorism", "destroying military objectives", "protecting and defending military objects", as well as the USA's mentions to assisting commanders in the battlefield, and Israel's mention to "effectuating" the intent of "commanders and operators". All these elements constitute references to the state's military apparatus. Moreover, the idea of "speed" and "effectiveness" of military strategy, which are also mentioned by Russia and endorsed by Israel, further shows that the perspective adopted is the perspective of the state, as they refer to the use of these weapons to increase the state's performance during armed conflict.

In this story, the benefit of reducing collateral damage is added to operational and strategic benefits. Despite taking most of the time in the ordering of the story compared to operation and strategic benefits, the concept of 'civilian' itself reflects the point of view of militarized state because the 'civilian' is a human reduced to its position as a non-combatant within an existing armed conflict. To be able to "save" civilian lives through more precise

targeting, those lives must already be in danger due to the state's engagement in organized violence. Therefore, the point of view of the narrative is that of the state whose security needs and interests push them to engage in armed conflict. The need to protect civilians is but secondary to that wider plot.

By legitimizing a category of weapons as beneficial in relation to the state's potential military needs in a conflict scenario, the meaning of security in this space is thus linked to what individual states will identify as their security needs. The future use of LAWS, as well as any means of warfare, is implicitly linked to the state's ability to combat whatever threat it comes to identify, which are abstractly taken for granted as legitimate pursuits. Thus, the narrative legitimizes the long-standing understanding that states are in the better position to define and provide security (Wibben 80), and thereby aligns with traditional meanings and practices of security, which "are fixed primarily in relation to the military requirements of supposedly sovereign states" (Wibben 70).

5.3 THE ETHICS OF BALANCING RISKS AND BENEFITS

From the two diverging narratives outlined above, it is possible to note that the different ways in which referents of security are represented are indeed crucial to produce the diverging views on the ethicality of LAWS within the GGE. In the Palestinian narrative, LAWS are unethical not only because they are not as precise as ban-resisting actors portray them to be, but also because they will likely facilitate the use of force by state and non-state actors alike and thus lead to the proliferation of violence at all levels of political organization and increased vulnerability of social and global minorities. Security means to protect the individual from the state's pursuit of its own military interests. Conversely, in the case of Israel, LAWS are represented as 'heroic weapons' (Cooper 2011) because they will likely decrease the number of civilian deaths in conflict. Importantly, the Israeli effort in weighting risks and benefits is marked by the reduction of the series of 'human' security needs invoke by Palestine to the civilian's security needs as seen from the warring state's perspective. The protection of the individual is then conditional upon the pursuit of the state's military needs.

This makes sense within Cooper's (2011) account of the post-cold war "regime of truth" regarding ethical discourses in relation to the individual as a referent of security. To recall, the author argues that it has been shaped by the de-securitization of 'pariah' weapons in relation to the state as a referent of security and have led to the establishment of legitimized categories of 'heroic' weapons – i.e., weapons "deemed to embody positive values" and/or "deemed central to national defence". This solidified the growing legitimacy of modern weaponry which could

be described as more precise and thus causing less collateral damage. The case of LAWS epitomizes this relational construction of indiscriminate pariah weapons/heroic high-precision weapons. These weapons can simultaneously be described as highly effective for strategic and operational purposes (and thus central to national defence) and portrayed as upholding the historically constructed value of civilian protection. Thus, the Israeli narrative draws on the established narrative of 'heroic' weapons as established within the 'humanitarian turn' in arms control.

This interpretation aligns with Zehfuss' (2010) findings into her study on the ethicality of Precision-Guided Munitions – a type of high-precision weapon widely in use. According to this author, the positive portrayal of precision warfare is tightly linked to "the trade-off between achieving military aims and endangering non-combatants" (547). Similarly, Wheeler (2002), has argued that the development of high precision weapons in the last decade is positively regarded because it "opened up new possibilities for reducing the risks of civilian casualties without sacrificing military effectiveness" (216), thereby facilitating the balance between the state's security and individual security. As Cooper also notes, "*the language of state security* was coopted to promote human security, to preserve life, and prevent threats to its existence" (Cooper 145, emphasis added). Here, the 'ethics' of balancing risks and benefits by reducing the 'human' to the 'civilian' is enabled by this historically legitimized trade-off as a positive security goal.

Therefore, the ethical conundrum within the GGE can, so far, be explained as a mismatch between whose security is privileged in each narrative. However, privileging state security in these terms is not a straightforward process. The state is not clearly made the primary referent of security through direct claims to sovereignty, as typical of previously *realpolitik* in arms control. Rather, it depends on the stability and legitimacy of the representation of the individual which allows for the accommodation between the needs of the individual and the needs of the state. In the GGE, however, this stability is shaken by the Palestinian attempt to expand the perceived security needs of the individual. The question then becomes: what allows Israel to maintain the stability of this construction in the face of narratives such as Palestine's? This is then evocative of Robinson's provocation about what kind of power relations can be found within the construction of the individual as a referent of security.

Following Robinson (2011), normative understandings of security that reinforce existing relations of power are often linked to a gendered distribution of care across the public/private divide. As explained in section 2, this constitutes a key theme in feminist IR

theories, which posit that the rationale of the public/private divide pervades the theory and practice of international politics and works to legitimize violence on the public sphere by de-legitimizing the concerns of marginalized actors (Blanchard 2011). Israel's balancing of 'risks' and 'benefits' is, as mentioned, aimed at excluding 'risks' from the Group's report rather than engaging with them. Because the security needs of Palestine's 'individual' are being downplayed, this suggests that a particular distribution of care is taking form to shape the idea of ethical warfare. Further deconstructing the narrative outlined above, I will argue below that the rationale underpinning Israel's interventions construct the world of arms control and the possibilities within it along the lines of a gendered public/private divide.

5.4 THE (MASCULINE) PUBLIC REALM OF "HARDCORE SECURITY ISSUES" AND THE (FEMINIZED) PRIVATE REALM OF POLITICS

As mentioned, the exercise of balancing risks and benefits determines whether LAWS are seen as a threat to security (unethical) or a means to achieving security (ethical). Thus, from the standpoint of narratology, balancing risks and benefits can be understood as an exercise in defining the boundaries of the Group's collective narrative. Especially, the anti-ban effort to emphasize benefits and downplay risks constitutes an attempt to narrow the frame by omitting, excluding, or invalidating elements of other narratives. In other words, it is about carving silences or 'ellipsis' in the narrative. As Wibben explains, silences are an important part of constructing narratives: "By looking at what a story does not say, cannot say, and, most strikingly, *refuses* to say, the epistemic violence of ellipsis can be pointed to and contested [emphasis added]" (Wibben 61).

Central to this process is Israel's representation of the normative space in which the arms control process takes place, which limits the possibilities of what arguments can be brought up by delegations at the GGE. The way Israel balances risks and benefits is linked to the way they draw on and reinforce aspects of the existing "social, symbolic, and political order" (Wibben 44). As such, Israel's narrative remains coherent because their representation of that order dictates "what meanings are possible (i.e., meaningful, reasonable, and rational) and which are not (i.e., meaningless, preposterous, and irrational)" (Wibben 43). In this light, I will argue that Israel draws on a particular characterization of the CCW as an arms control space to categorize arguments based on their 'relevance' to the 'realm' of military practice. This dynamic is seen as highly gendered because it attributes 'relevance' according to masculinist binaries such as rational/emotional and objective/subjective, which is strongly evocative of the typical public/private divide as conceptualized by Robinson.

The primary clog in this mechanism is the representation of the CCW as a strictly IHL space. This is linked to guiding principle (k), which establishes that balancing "military necessities and humanitarian concerns" is a relevant part of discussing any potential normative frameworks under the CCW, given the Convention's nature of an arms control framework established around humanitarian concerns. In anti-ban narratives such as Israel's, this characterization is amplified, as it advances the notion that the CCW, as a humanitarian arms control forum, is a *strictly* IHL forum – i.e., that IHL is the only legal framework to guide any discussions under the CCW. As mentioned in their opening statement and outlined above, the Israeli delegation has affirmed that a ban is not needed because International Humanitarian Law (IHL) "*suffices in regulating the use of any future weapon system*". They consistently emphasize this point throughout the meetings, having also stated that "IHL fully applies to lethal autonomous weapons systems and is a sufficient legal framework for any future use of LAWS" (2nd session, 5th meeting) and that they had "already made it rather clear that they would not support the inclusion of limitations and prohibitions which go beyond existing IHL" (2nd session, 7th meeting). When explaining their understanding of principle (k) in their 2021 national commentary, Israel argued:

> Israel believes that the CCW continues to be the appropriate forum for international dialogue on the issue of emerging technologies in the area of LAWS, as a *professional*, and *non-politicized* framework *for relevant IHL issues* in this field, *which balances between military necessity and humanitarian considerations*. In this regard, it is important to remain within the agreed mandate for discussion and *stick to the objectives and purposes of the CCW*.

Here, the phrase "objectives and purposes" is directly linked to "IHL issues" and thus to the balance between "military necessity and humanitarian considerations" - reference to striking a balance between these two sets of concerns is an IHL trope (ICRC 2004). Notwithstanding, although the CCW's preamble refers to principles of IHL and the protection of civilians in armed conflict, IHL is by no means described as the only or the primary legal framework to inform the interpretation of the CCW's purposes. In fact, references are made to the overarching purpose of continue codifying new international law applicable to armed conflict toward "general and complete disarmament". However, focus on the balance between military necessity and humanitarian considerations has been institutionalized through its consistent emphasis in previous CCW meetings (Docherty 14). Therefore, the inherent and indissoluble bond between the CCW and IHL as constructed by the Israeli delegation stems for the institutionalization of a dominant narrative about this normative space.

The important thing to note about this characterization is that IHL might have constrained state sovereignty by limiting the legitimate options for means and methods of warfare, but it is still predicated upon the core conviction that states have the *sovereign* right to engage in armed conflict and choose between means and methods of warfare. According to Schmitt (2010), the principle of military necessity is, essentially, the IHL mechanism for ensuring the state's right to "pursue and safeguard vital national interests" (799). Through IHL, states then "insist that legal norms not unduly restrict their freedom of action on the battlefield, such that national interests might be affected" (799).

In terms of unveiling concept of security, the very formulation of the sentence "strike a balance between military necessity and humanitarian considerations" is in itself suggestive of the hierarchy between the state and the 'human' as referents of security. The word "necessity", after all, conveys indispensability; it denotes something essentially high-priority and overriding. In contrast, the word "considerations" conveys the sense that humanitarian issues are both lower-priority and discretionary. They may lead to the flexibilization of military needs but not quash them. Besides, to "consider" a factor is not to be bound by the moral force of value. Therefore, the ethics of the 'trade-off' mentioned in the previous section - between the security needs of states and the protection of the individual – draws legitimacy from this construction of the CCW as bound exclusively to IHL considerations.

This characterization acquires even more weight as pro-ban delegations attempt to establish that existing IHL is *not* enough to address the risks posed by LAWS and seek to spur discussions about ethical considerations in the scope of the Group's discussions. The proposition to include other applicable legal and ethical frameworks in the discussion intended to expand the scope of the acceptable ethical discourse within the Group and thus allow for a better accommodation of the security needs raised by Palestine/G10:

> We believe that AWS also present wider ethical and humanitarian challenges that transcend the legal framework under IHL. Debates on autonomous weapon systems must not be limited to discussing legal, military, and technical considerations. They must also end crucially, recognize that ethics, the principles of humanity, the dictates of public conscience and humanitarian imperatives are at the heart of concerns about the acceptability of AWS. These considerations must be factored in and given their full weight when determining prohibitions and positive obligations related to autonomous weapon systems (1st session, 11th meeting)

What is being problematized here is the already mentioned fact that existing rules of IHL can only protect the individual as far as the principles of distinction, proportionality, and precautions allow – that is, these principles create a norm for states to seek minimization of

collateral damage after the outbreak of a conflict. To be able to address Palestinian concerns such as a lower threshold for the use of force and the potential proliferation of violence perpetrated by state and non-state actors, which precede and transcend the specific situation of the outbreak of a conflict, IHL would need to be complemented with an additional discussion on ethics. Against this move, Israel expressly supported statements delivered by the UK, the Netherlands, and France. In the UK's statement, the argument is that ethical standards must be determined in context:

> We are dealing with applied ethics here, that is to say an ethical framework that regulates conduct in a specific field. It is therefore essential to understand the context in which we are operating in order to identify ethical concerns and the implications which are the most relevant. Medical ethics, for example, includes the principle of nonmaleficence, the concept of doing no harm, but military practice often involves *unavoidable harm with the objective of an overall good*. Therefore, ethics in the context of armed conflict requires a more nuanced approach to suit a military context, *which seeks to balance harms with the resulting overall good [...] To that end, within the specific context of armed conflict, the most relevant field of ethical discourse is military ethics. This grounding in ethics is a core feature of IHL.* (1st session, 11th meeting)

In other words, the UK advances that IHL already provides an ethical framework because it recognizes that, in military practice, unlike in medicine, states must cause *some harm* to achieve its military goals, which are *good*. The assumption is then that a state's military goals, achieved through violence, are to be seen as having value in itself and thereby produce ethical results if balanced with the harm caused. In the same direction, the Netherlands argues that "humanitarian considerations have already been taken into account when the existing international humanitarian law instruments were drafted, and, as such ethical considerations have played their part when that law was adopted" (1st session, 11th meeting). Therefore, the argument made by both delegations is that ethics can only 'count' in these discussions to the extent that IHL allows for it to count because this normative space is about military practice and, consequently, tied to the military needs of states.

The statement delivered by France, on the other hand, veers towards the idea that any appeals to 'ethics' cannot override the authority of IHL. According to the French ambassador, the centrality of IHL makes discussions about ethics irrelevant: "it doesn't seem to us to be relevant to make ethics of equal importance as international law and, in particular International Humanitarian Law, which is the central part of a CCW and therefore the work of the GGE" (1st session, 11th meeting). Moreover, from his perspective:

> International military law is, of course, the framework for international debates. But what ethics means can vary from one individual to another, from one state

to another or even just one different viewpoint to another. International law, however, doesn't allow for a disparity in interpretations (1st session, 11th meeting).

Put differently, France's statement advances the idea that 'ethics' cannot override IHL due to its subjective nature. The idea that law, unlike ethics, is a more authoritative framework because of its objectivity comes from the understanding that sovereign states can only have their sovereignty limited by the international agreements to which they acquiesce (Hutchings 1999: 3-4). It follows that, from this standpoint, ethics, as a subjective concept, belongs outside the scope of the CCW and under the purview of sovereign states.

In that occasion, Israel endorsed these reasonings and added that "an *inaccurate* discussion on ethics could possibly undermine the obligations in international law and more specifically, IHL, and thus the protection of civilians" (1st session, 11th meeting). Here, the Israeli narrative thus locate the GGE's discussion within one side of an ethical fault line - between a 'right way' and a 'wrong way' to discuss ethics, the 'accurate' or 'right' being discussing it in an exclusive link to military practice ethics. Again, the division between accurate/inaccurate thus constructs the idea of a boundary around arms control/disarmament as a military space, in which certain ideas about ethics are 'relevant' and others are not.

The categorical denial of any other ethical framework as relevant in the realm of military practice suggests that this is considered a 'public' space associated with militarized state security, whereas 'ethics' belongs to the private space of domestic politics. This type of reasoning can be seen as reflecting the realist approach to ethics which Hutchings (1999) calls "morality of states" and whose defining characteristic is "that it acknowledges that states are the crucial ethical actors in the international context and bases the principles of international ethics on the principle of state sovereignty" (3). Anchored on the principle of sovereignty and the struggle for survival, the morality of states creates a persisting division between the ethics of international politics and private morality (Hutchings 1999; Lundborg 2018). In the Israeli narratives, the arguments advanced amount to this view, in which private morality either does not have a place in considerations about security or the only ethics appropriate is the realist ethics of inter-state relations, which postulates that violence is ethical when used to ensure survival[4] (Lundborg 2018; Hutchings 1999).

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[4] It is important to note that some approaches to the morality of states have nuanced the realist view of survival in an anarchical world. In particular, those founded upon the "just war" tradition embedded in IHL, which governs the morality of entering and conducting war. According to this tradition, states are encouraged to treated each other with mutual respect, reciprocity, and search for mutual advantage. Therefore, to some extent, states are seen as removed from the state of nature (Hutchings 5). Nevertheless, this logic still presupposes the need to control the anarchical nature of the international systems through an inter-state 'code of conduct'

In the words of Grant (1992) and Tickner (1991), the morality of states can be seen as the expression of the state as 'sovereign man' who has the power to separate public and private morality and legitimize violence in the public sphere. This echoes their accounts of how gender codes have historically been pivotal factors in conceptualizing a separation between the 'international' sphere of war and the 'private' sphere of domestic politics – war is seen as an unavoidable phenomenon in an 'anarchical' world. Hence the need for *accurate* discussions about applied, *objective* ethical standards. War is fought among autonomous 'masculine' state whose actions are characterized by reason, agency, control, objectivity. To this realm, adding concerns pertaining to the private sphere of domestic politics introduce 'feminine' characteristics such as emotion, passivity, and uncertainty, which are deemed incompatible with the logics of sovereignty and survival.

Furthermore, a second - and related - ellipsis is enabled by the construction of this public space as guided by reason, which excludes any considerations that might compromise the rationality of these discussions. Beyond 'balancing' state needs and individual needs, the ascension of the individual as a referent of security served to push states to 'rationalize' their military practices – adding precision to weapons systems through automation is, after all, about maximizing the utility of means of warfare while minimizing collateral damage. In the GGE's discussions, it is possible to argue that this rationalization depends on a particular construction of the objectivity of military and technological expertise. This can be noticed in relation to a second aspect of the characterization of place – namely, that this narrow frame is further solidified by the characterization of the CCW as a "professional", "non-politicized" space for discussing IHL issues (see Israel's interpretation of principle k, above). The idea is brought up in both the written submission and reinforced in their opening statement:

> In our view, *the greatest contribution to our discussions over the past years came from those who hold knowledge and expertise regarding emerging technologies in the areas of LAWS*. And we believe that such expertise should continue to frame and guide our discussions rather than *interventions of political nature* (3rd session, 1st meeting).

Read in connection with their characterization of the CCW as a "professional" and "non-politicized" space to discuss IHL, the opposition between "interventions of political nature" and "contributions […] from those who hold knowledge" about LAWS is clearly related to forms of military and technical expertise (since IHL necessarily revolves around AI and means and modes of warfare). This opposition invokes a binary between what is 'political' and 'subjective' and what is 'objective' and thereby creates a frame for this narrative in which

the 'truth' about the acceptability of weaponized technology rests upon the perception of military and technological expertise as objective knowledge.

In this sense, the key force for establishing ellipsis here is the disassociation of the 'political' with 'knowledge'. What this ellipsis fails to acknowledge – or intends to obscure – is that political projects and scientific goals are often co-constitutive; scientific agendas are, for example, shaped by political interests (Harding 2011:166). Invoking a clear distinction between 'objective' knowledge and 'politics' is an intensely political move in itself. Yet, the appeal to objectivity naturalizes and privileges the political interests that are held up in contrast with those labeled as 'subjective'. It takes power, however, to be able to sustain such a division. Feminists have often highlighted the gendered logics of claiming objectivity by defining boundaries to keep away any sense of uncertainty added by forms of knowledge associated with 'femininity' (Hooper 46). As Peterson (1992) argues, "to the extent that masculinism is privileged, forms of knowledge associated with the 'subjective' and the 'feminine' are devalued and resisted as inferior to 'hard science' with its claims to objectivity, certainty, and control" (Peterson 190).

In this case, Israel is not arguing that all security concerns raised in the GGE need to be jointly addressed by scientific of using scientific expertise to work on the same problems but distributing problems into 'relevant' and 'irrelevant'. It is only because concerns deemed too 'political' and thus 'subjective' (the need to discuss ethics, the proliferation of violence, the gendered and racialized consequences of data bias, and the vulnerabilities of Southern populations) are transferred to another sphere of relevance, that Israel's own view of what security is and how to achieve it can acquire a sense of objectivity. Nonetheless, this ellipsis ultimately constructs the idea that the security of the individual is achievable through an 'objective' discussion on the inherent or potential technological capabilities of LAWS. This is at the crux of how the security needs of vulnerable or marginalized populations can be dismissed within arms control strategies, and it is a point I will come back to in the next section.

Furthermore, as the representation of the arms control as a normative space restricts what can be said, it also lays the ground for the construction of actors within this space. The first relevant characterization of pro-ban actors comes from the idea that they are "demonizing" technology, as expressed by Israel in the opening statement outlined in section 2.2. The words used by the Israeli and other delegations, such as "bashing" and "demonizing" represent pro-ban states as irrational and unreasonable characters. Still in the opening statement, by advocating for "cautious" instead of "demonizing" attitudes, pro- and anti-ban become split in a cautious/reckless and knowing/fearing binary where anti-ban positions are associated with

rationally and calculatingly in search of knowledge, whereas pro-ban positions are associated with exaggerated and irrational fears leading to precipitated, uninformed, and potentially dangerous attitudes instead of knowledgeable.

This construction is reinforced by other statements. For example, later in the first session of 2021, Israel endorsed two interventions by India in which pro-ban calls were questioned. The Israeli delegate stated:

> I just wanted to support the views expressed earlier and just now by the distinguished Indian ambassador. We reiterate our call to have *realistic* deliberations [...] Israel will not support a mandate to negotiate a legally binding agreement; and from what we heard during this week, going down a *radical* path might bring some HCP to insist in maintaining the present mandate (1st session, 7th meeting)

In particular, Israel's call for "realistic" discussions refers to and draw on the following reaction by the Indian ambassador to pro-ban interventions:

> I have heard the very *passionate* pleas and… what distinguishes human beings from lower forms of life is *emotions*. And there is nothing wrong with invoking emotions and feelings. We all have emotions and feelings. However, I must remind this room that *we are not here to discuss emotions or feelings.* We are here to discuss *hardcore security issues*. And what we need is a *dispassionate, effective, and fact-based discussion* (1st session, 7th meeting).

In other words, the Indian ambassador associates the adjectives "effective and fact-based" to "hardcore security issues", which logically stands in opposition to emotions and feelings and are seen as radicalizing and impeding the discussion. Whatever arguments are associated with "emotions and feelings" are thus relegated to the margins of security issues. This rationale is seen as typical of the dominant rationalist approaches to IR, which tend to dismiss emotions as "irrational distortions of rational thought" (Jeffery 7). As Acheson (2018) argues in relation to discussions about Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, critiques of the 'scientific' discourses of war coming from those affected are often dismissed as emotional, which constitutes a gendered form of de-legitimizing competing security concerns: "when those flexing their 'masculinity' want to demonstrate or reinforce their power and dominance, they try to make others seem small and marginalised by accusing them of being emotional, overwrought, irrational, or impractical" (2).

Interestingly, the interventions by India and Israel followed a statement by the *Campaign to Stop Killler Robots*, which did not expressly mention emotions and feelings but summarized pro-ban positions so far and closed by affirming:

> We aspire to live in a world in which we respect each other's inherent dignity. Where we all take responsibility for how our choices regarding technology, technological change, type technology, change the relationships between us individually and collectively in which technology is developed and used to promote peace, justice, human rights, equality and respect for the law and where people work together as activists and experts to build a better society and overcome inequalities and systems of oppression (1st session, 7th meeting).

Therefore, one could argue that invoking values such as peace, human dignity and equality is the passionate plea associated with emotions, feelings, and unrealistic deliberations. This goes hand in hand with de-legitimizing Palestine's concerns about proliferation of violence, the vulnerability of Southern populations, and the perpetuation of social biases as ethical considerations on the basis that they only perform a function of appealing to feelings, which cannot be taken seriously in field of hardcore security practice. In this rationale, the Israeli narrative creates a rationality separate from the idea that the state's pursuit of military capabilities, such as increasing autonomy in military AI, has consequences in a world marked by "inequalities" and "systems of oppression".

From the above, Israel's narrative discursively separates what is "politicized" and "emotional" (social inequalities, power asymmetries, the proliferation of violence) from what is "objective" (the state's military needs, military expertise, military ethics). Following Robinson (2011), this means that the distribution of care within this binary places care – in terms of listening to and fulfilling the needs of individuals – largely outside the realm of the public 'security' sphere. In this sphere, care can only be given at the margins of the process through which violence is legitimized – i.e., as minimizing the collateral damage caused by the necessary and legitimate pursuit of the state's security needs. As a result, the construction of ethics in Israel's narrative is predicated upon silencing competing security needs through the ellipsis enabled by the public/private binary.

I will now propose a discussion of the issues of algorithmic bias and the vulnerability of Southern populations to show in more detail how the production of ethics through Israel's security narrative is sustained by the ellipsis created by transferring 'care' to the private sphere.

5.5 THE RATIONALITY OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE AND THE RELATIONALITY OF THE GENDERED AND RACIALIZED CIVILIAN

The existence of bias in training datasets, as narrated by Palestine, undermines any claims for precision in weapons systems that target people. Yet, as mentioned above, Israel claims that considerations regarding social bias should not be included in the Group's report since the concept belongs to the "domestic sphere". Within the logics of the private/public divide outline

above, this means that the idea of social bias is a political concept rather than an objective one. As such, it should not be dealt with in the 'rational' realm of international security. It logically follows that this narrative constructs the concept of civilian as an ungendered, value-neutral concept. Care for the individual in terms of listening and fulfilling (security) needs revolving around social relations is then pushed to the margins of the GGE's discussion.

Despite Israel's representation of civilian protection as an objectively good and rational security goal for the individual, it has been well established that the very concept of civilian is an artificial and profoundly gendered one. To being with, the principle of distinction between civilians and combatants was never meant to be an objective one, with uncertainty having always been recognized as an intrinsic and defining feature of the civilian-combatant distinction in both legal theory and military practice (Kinsella 2006; Carpenter 2006). International law scholars, for example, recognize that the term is essentially an indeterminate concept, with some going so far as to say it constitutes the "most fragile" principle of IHL (Kinsella 2006:162). As Kinsella (2006) argues, "while we may speak of the 'combatant' and 'civilian' as if the distinction were unmistakable and sure - a seemingly self-evident categorization in which one is either one or the other, combatant or civilian - it is precisely the distinction that cannot be taken as self-evident or secure" (162).

Kinsella (2006) demonstrates that the concept of civilian depends on a constructed presumption of 'innocence' as was formulated in foundational IHL texts and carried onto current IHL principles. Throughout this history and in practice, the concept of 'innocence' has been deeply intertwined with essentialist gender discourses predicated upon the perception of sex - i.e., civilians perceived as adult males are likely to be presumed as combatants while perceived females are placed in the same unsuspicious category as children and the elderly (Kinsella 163; Carpenter 2-3; Bayard de Volo 2016):

> We learn from the ICRC commentaries on the IV Convention that there are "certain categories of the population who, by definition, take no part in the fighting": Civilians are identifiable because their "shared suffering, distress, or weakness" makes them incapable of bearing arms, fighting, or taking an active part in the hostilities. Those whose "shared suffering, distress or weakness" identifies them as civilians are "children, women, old people, the wounded and the sick (Kinsella 183)

To illustrate this with a concrete example, U.S. practice with semi-autonomous weaponized drones is centred around the concept of "Military Age Males" (MAMs); all MAMs within a geographical area labelled as a 'strike zone' are considered legitimate targets: "this gendered guilt-by-association logic operates under the notion that 'people in an area of known

terrorist activity, or found with a top Al Qaeda operative, are probably up to no good' […] But in practice and legally it is not people but men who are defined as potential threats and thus killable" (Bayard de Volo 54).

Pro-ban actors have argued, as mentioned, that encoding similar pre-existing social bias in algorithms will not only impede compliance with IHL but also serve to perpetuate gender and racial biases. However, the crucial point here goes beyond that – the ethicality of high-precision weapons is based on the idea of the 'rationality' and 'neutrality' of technology. The representation of LAWS as an ethical weapon through the emphasis on high-precision and ability to distinguish between civilians and combatants is enabled by and exponentially amplifies this belief in the objectivity of military and technological expertise. As narrated by anti-ban states, LAWS are beneficial because they remove human emotions from the weapons; the machine serving as a channel for human reasoning, the possibility of removing emotions gives *reason* the ultimate space to function optimally. The underlying assumption here is of course that human reason is impaired by emotions and other cognitive limitations. Extending the capabilities of the human brain through automation, however, it is possible to find 'reason'.

Wilcox (2014) refers to this as "the myth of Cartesian Mind/Body separation that divorces vision and knowledge from bodies" (145). Precision warfare is premised upon visual knowledge – i.e., it is about the visual *recognition*. Although the use of algorithms creates a sense that information about the human body can be neutral and objective when reduced to codes processes by a machine, the 'mind' or human reason cannot be divorced from the material existence of the body. Regardless of whether visual recognition is assisted by a machine, 'visual' knowledge is already always political and mediated because it is based on cultural modes of representation and therefore always shaped by political subjectivity. This means that the process of targeting people through weaponized visual recognition algorithms is not only about recognizing but *producing* "killable bodies" (20). Put differently, algorithms have no meaning by itself, but they are always *performative* in the sense that it needs human interpretation and representation to produce targets.

Wilcox's conclusions are well-supported by researchers within AI, which argue that "Completely value-neutral AI may be a chimera" (Turner 2019) - algorithms are necessarily "value-laden" because they require developers to set operational parameters according to an outcome in mind (Mittelstadt et al. 2016; Brey and Soraker, 2009). Ban-resisting actors such as Israel might not be pretending that algorithms are neutral in the sense that they uphold an ethical profile for LAWS by emphasizing that IHL principles such as combatant-civilian distinction, which is an ethical principle – can be encoded in an algorithm. This consideration,

however, is limited to the perceived outcome of an algorithm-based decision. The ethical issue with algorithms is not only that the intended outcome itself privileges some values and interests over others, but also that the parameters are influenced by the designer's social and moral context, which shapes their perceptions and, by extension, the outcome (Tuner 2019; Mittelstadt et al. 2016).

Here, the encoded outcome – to kill a human target – is based on assumptions about what types of bodies look like a threat. It requires the production of what a threat looks like embodied in a human and cannot but be based on gendered and racialized assumptions (Wilcox 2014). Along these lines, rather than 'objective' or 'neutral', "the pretence of separating vision from embodiment is associated with masculine forms of knowledge" (Wilcox 145). Put differently, pretending that gender does not matter is a gendered rather than gender neutral, as it comes from the partial assumptions made from the point of view of the masculine as the normative and thus the model for the neutral human (Sjoberg 2016).

Only by refusing to say that concerns such as gender bias matter – thus creating ellipsis in the narrative - Israel can portray the rationality and objectivity of LAWS as a highly precise weapon as unproblematically ethical. Israel's division between the public 'security' sphere and the 'domestic' sphere in which social bias is relevant then obscures and naturalizes the violence produced by high-precision warfare. This is highly linked to Robinson's idea of how important relationality is in shaping ideas of what is ethical. A relational perception of the referent of security will, like in Palestine's narrative, consider gendered patterns of violence relevant for the assessment of ethicality in security practices. Contrarily, a purely rationalist view of ethics, based on a universalised and abstracted notion of the individual, will produce a radically different view by reducing reality and context.

A parallel can be made in terms of Palestine's arguments regarding the proliferation of violence and the vulnerability of Southern populations. As Cohn (1987) has argued in relation to nuclear deterrence, the 'technostrategic' discourse of arms control limits the perception of the effects of weapons to the perception of the user and prevents the understanding of security form the perspective of the victims. Blanchard (2011) advances a similar argument regarding new autonomous technologies; like Cohn, he suggests that the "technowar" discourse is always told from the perspective of the users and never considers the perspective of the victims (158).

In this regard, Zehfuss (2010) provides a detailed exploration of how increased faith in precision weapons has historically led to a higher exposure of civilians. According to this study, comparisons between the 'body count' left behind by smart and dumb weapons often depart from the assumption that the targets being hit are the same. Rather, the advent of growingly

precise weapons has enabled militaries to target ever smaller target in ever more ambiguous and problematic environments. For example, in World War II, warring parties had the burden to justify bombing a whole city to eliminate a target, whereas the use of high-precision weapons lowers the political costs of sending semi-autonomous drones to invade highly populated areas in search of human targets.

While LAWS are not yet a reality, they are but a step forward in a longer path towards perfecting precision through the disembodiment and automation of warfighting. Thus, experience with high precision weapons such as 'smart bombs' and 'killer drones' provide a clue to how a mode of warfare premised upon the 'humanizing' capability of high-precision weapons works. Contrarily to what faith in autonomy might suggest, this has not been without a significant civilian death toll that arguably could have been avoided if it were not for the faith on high-precision weapons:

> As Sebastian Kaempf (2006: Ch. 5) shows *in relation to Afghanistan, various reports have argued that a greater use of ground troops and special forces in particular could have reduced the risks for civilians.* This makes assessing the impact of precision weapons on non-combatant casualty levels tricky. Smith (2002: 359) claims that '[a]erial bombardment of civilian centers is almost inevitable in modern warfare'. This is not least because 'hi-tech tactics have had striking success in minimizing casualties, actually heightening the appeal of aerial bombing' (Smith, 2002: 361). *[…] In other words, it is important to note that the capabilities of 'smart' bombs have made it possible to take on targets that would previously have been considered impossible to bomb from the air. This may increase the likelihood of collateral damage* (Zehfuss 553, emphasis added)

In the Afghan-Pakistani border, the US conducted a series of attacks between 2004 and 2018 using drones to target suspects of terrorism. As Sauer and Schörnig (2012) argue, this experience was far from corroborating that the civilian population was in any more protected by the use of high-precision weapons: "estimates of the numbers of civilian casualties […] suggest that the hastily fielded technology is less discriminate and proportionate than was hoped" (372). Some have estimated that 32% of deaths caused by drones in North-western Pakistan were civilians deaths, although the numbers are fraught with lack of transparency (Blanchard 2011). Nevertheless, increasing faith in high-precision weaponry has naturalized and legitimized collateral damage by enabling the representation of this series of "small massacres" as unfortunate "accidents" that count in the public imaginary as exceptions that confirm the rule of otherwise consistent precision (Owens 2003). Groups of Pakistani women organized against the US drone campaigns and a survey conducted across rural Pakistan by Al

Jazeera showed that 67% opposed US drone use and 59% found the US more threatening than the Pakistani Taliban and or India (Blanchard 158).

Pulling this thread closer to this thesis case study, we can illustrate this point by fleshing out examples from Palestine: do Palestinian civilians feel more secure by Israel's use of high-precision weapons meant to 'humanize' warfare? Here, Kanwal (2021) problematizes the "hegemonic narratives surrounding surgical precision and minimal casualties, supposed to characterize contemporary drone warfare", as the reliance of Israel on drones legitimizes the submission of Palestinians to the continuous threat and perpetration of violence (244). Kanwal (2021) uses the wartime diary of Palestinian political scientist Abu Saif, named *The Drone Eats with Me* to discuss how Palestinian civilians living under a "dronified territory" experience war (245). In this account, drone warfare is represented as creating an enclosure for Palestinian minds and bodies, as experience with the death caused by drones and their constant presence subjects them to constant fear:

> The diary shows how the lives of characters within the "dronesphere" are enmeshed with a lethal drone that is perceived as a living entity, "patrolling the streets [as it] sharpens its teeth every minute" (112). It does this so that it can eat "as much as it could before it fasted. It was filling its stomach" (133) with Gazans.

This narrative is evocative of Zehfuss' argument about of how trust in high-precision warfare leads to the legitimization of the presence of weapons in spaces occupied by civilians and thus increase their exposure. It also relates to Owens' concern about the transformation of deaths into "accidents", as he draws attention to the silencing of the deaths caused by drone warfare. While his concern is with the lack of accountability promoted by de-territorialization, he makes a compelling argument about the how the increased lack of accountability promoted by technowar compounds with the wider patterns of silence around the deaths of Muslims and racialized 'others' in Western media (Kanwal 422). If, as Owens proposes, faith in high precision legitimizes killing as "accidents", this would signify exacerbated insecurity of Palestinians communities whose death are already widely naturalized and legitimized.

Here, I am not attempting to show the 'reality' or the implications of LAWS. The point is to offer an illustration of the function performed by Israel's claims to 'objectivity' in opposition to 'politics'. The lived experience of civilians whose lives are intertwined with the threat of armed conflict and who are supposed to be the referent of security in this narrative of 'ethical' warfare, severely complicates the idea of what is 'objectively' ethical. Engaging with these perspectives, as advanced by Palestine, would mean to be open to the idea that a great portion of the world's 'civilians' could be in greater danger because of high-precision weapons.

Yet, Israel's claim that the 'objective' is opposed to the 'political' or to those concerns associated with the 'emotional' effectively closes the narrative frame. It upholds an ethical profile for LAWS by avoiding engagement with these arguments, pushing them outside the 'rational' and 'objective' world of nation-state security.

Again, this reflects Robinson's argument that, when it comes to (human) security, appeals to moral principles embedded on universalized legal frameworks, like IHL, overlooks the historical, social, and material contexts which shapes their experience of (in)security (Robinson 53). Thus, it often leads to the reproduction of insecurities rather than to more security, as it prevents understanding of "how people actually experience threats to their security and what kinds of policy measures could help achieve security for some of the world's most vulnerable people" (Robinson 52).

This means that the appeal to objectivity relegates listening and fulfilling needs to another sphere. Israel speaks objectively through the voice of the masculine, sovereign state to whom the 'civilian' can only be an abstraction created within the confined of IHL's trade-off between military needs and 'humanitarian' considerations – that is, reduced to a number in a body count. The Palestinian civilian's needs, as counted in Abu Saif's diary, however, cannot be fulfilled by increased precision in weapons systems because these weapons legitimize and sustain the state of death and fear to which they are subjected.

6 CONCLUSION: THE PRODUCTION OF ETHICS IN THE GGE ON LAWS AND THE GENDERED LIMITS OF HUMANITARIAN ARMS CONTROL

In this thesis, I have contextualized the ongoing discussion regarding a possible normative framework for emerging technologies in the area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS) within the wider puzzle of the post-cold war 'humanitarian turn' in arms control practices. Particularly, I have problematized the limits of this shift in terms of displacing the dominant, state-centric and militarist (neo)realist framework of security and including the individual as a referent of security. On the one hand, optimistic voices argued that the humanitarian turn in arms control is growingly permeable to ethical considerations centred on the protection of the individual over the security needs of the state. On the other, critics drew attention to the double-edged effects of the way humanitarian discourses have been used, emphasizing their role in legitimizing forms of warfare premised upon the deployment of high-precision weapons. Here, I explored questions related to how the 'humanitarian turn' allows high-precision, robotic warfare to be constructed as ethical or unethical: what type of ethical arguments and discourses have been enabled or constrained within this post-cold war

reinvention of arms control? Whose security can be ensured through 'humanized' warfare and on what terms? These discussions point to an understanding of how and to what extent the (neo)realist framework of security which had pervaded arms control has indeed been challenged.

The competing narratives advanced by Israel and Palestine in the GGE on LAWS bring out important aspects of this debate. In this thesis, I have demonstrated that Palestine's attempt to 'secure' the human individual from the threat of robotic weapons stretches the borders of the humanitarian discourse used by pro-ban actors in previous humanitarian arms control campaigns. By problematizing the proliferation of violence, the vulnerability of Southern populations, and the existence of social biases in technology, the Palestinian narrative paints a more complex picture of 'the individual' as a referent of security. It invites consideration of the relations of gender and ethnicity shaping the lived experiences of civilians. Along these lines, the meaning of security expressed by Palestine represents multiple positioned individuals as in need of protection from the state's pursuit of its security needs through ever more 'precise' military technology and, therefore, protection from '*humanized'* warfare. This narrative then challenges the much-reiterated representation of high-precision weapons as a benevolent technological development.

Meanwhile, in their narrative, Israel pushes back by attempting to maintain the structure of the dominant humanitarian narratives in arms control regarding the humanizing potential of high-tech weapons. This involves holding onto the representation of individual security within the narrow confines of International Humanitarian Law – i.e., insisting on looking at individual security as protection from collateral damage within armed conflict between states. Using tools provided by narrative analysis, I have gone beyond the dichotomic view of the 'humanitarian turn' as a matter of replacing referents of security. I argue that, in this narrative, the state has not been replaced by the individual as a referent of security but can be found in the production of the individual, whose needs are conceived at the margins of the states' own needs. This is possible because the individual represented in this narrative does not speak for itself but through the voice of the so-called objective, rational state. Therefore, fulfilment of the individual's security needs is conditional upon the security needs of the militarized and technologically developed state. I thus join scholars who point out that the 'humanitarian turn' does not suggest transcendence from state-centric forms of militarism but its transformation and entrenchment (Stavrianakis 2019; Cooper 2011).

These considerations have led me towards answering my problem formulation, which asks how gender contributes to enabling or constraining ethical arguments in this context. Here,

going further into the dynamic between Palestine and Israel's competition to shape the GGE's collective narrative, I found that a gender analysis helps to further expose the cracks inscribed on the edifice of humanitarian security regimes. For Palestine's narrative to succeed in shaping the GGE's 'collective narrative', it must breach the authority of the established representation of high-precision weapons as ethical, which is mobilized by Israel. Drawing on Fiona Robinson's conceptualization of the pervading gendered Public/Private binary within theory and practice of security, I have shown that Israel manages to uphold an ethical profile for LAWS by constructing the CCW and arms control as a 'special' normative space in which security must follow a particular logic – namely, the logic of a public international space characterized by the struggle for survival amongst sovereign, 'masculine' states. In this space, only certain ethical concerns can be recognized as relevant. This involves denying that, within arms control, ethical considerations are relevant, unless they are limited to the parameters established in legal principles or military practice, which favours a view of violent practices as inherently valuable and of ethics as otherwise not belonging to security considerations.

It also involves constructing a view of technology and security practices as 'objective' by claiming that the body of knowledge accumulated around LAWS cannot take into consideration 'political' concerns or emotional, irrational pleas. Israel's rationality, however, is performative; it is predicated upon the silencing and de-legitimization of crucial aspects of the problem at hand. I have shown this in detail by bringing up the discussion on algorithmic bias and the vulnerability of Southern populations. Looking at the issue of algorithmic bias, for example, it was possible to verify that, although Israel claims that social bias does not play a role in arms control but belongs to the "domestic sphere", gender is at the very center of both machine-learning and principles of International Humanitarian Law deemed 'relevant'. Rationality is then only rational within the very narrow frame delineated in the Israeli narrative.

Putting this into the terminology of the Ethics of Care, this points to two different ways of producing ethics within narratives of security – between 'rationality' (Israel) and relationality (Palestine). Here, Israel's appeals to the 'rationality' of abstract and de-contextualized representations of the individual's security needs aims to prevent consideration of the security needs of differently positioned individuals by avoiding engagement with these arguments, pushing them outside the 'rational' and 'objective' world of nation-state security. Contrarily, Palestine's view of security and ethics is intent on looking at relations of gender and ethnicity and bridging the gap between public and private. Hence, I suggest that the limits of arms control are marked by a gendered distribution of 'care', which ignores the needs of

individuals seen from their lived experiences as concerns belonging to the private sphere and legitimizes state violence in the public sphere.

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