Houston Area Model United Nations
Standard Committee

NATO

Co-Chairs | Brianna Burnside and Bobby Youstra
Topic A: Ethical Use of New Warfare Technology
Houston Area Model United Nations 50
February 6 & 7, 2025

Note to Delegates

Delegates,

Howdy! My name is Brianna and I'm a Junior Political Science major at Texas A&M.

I joined Model UN my junior year of highschool, so I was a little late to the game. I instantly fell in love with Model UN and became vice president of my school's chapter my senior year. Model UN pushed me towards my dream career of working in Law and was a prime factor in me choosing political science as my major at TAMU.

I wanted to chair NATO because NATO is an incredibly important committee globally and I wanted to learn more about the inner workings of it. I am very excited for our topic of AI, autonomous weaponry, and new warfare technology as it is a very relevant topic to the modern era.

A few last minute tips: Don't procrastinate! I know that is easier said than done but to truly succeed and push yourself at conference, it is imperative to start early; Research countries in the committee with similar views to your country, this is a great way to make allies and find people to work with; Lastly, have fun! HAMUN is a great way to meet new people and make lifelong friendships. Step out of your comfort zone a little!

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Chair of NATO
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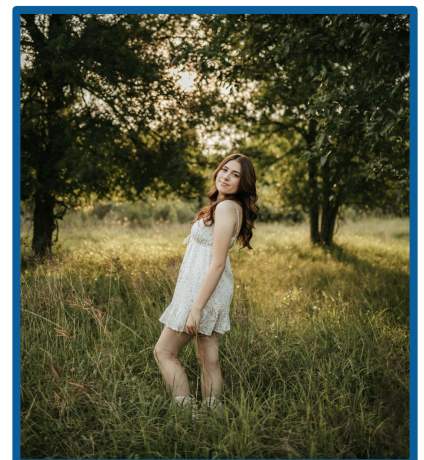
Note to Delegates

Delegates,

My name is Bobby Youstra, and I'm very excited to be your NATO committee chair for HAMUN 50. I'm a senior studying computer science at UT Austin, although I'm originally from the San Francisco Bay Area. I first started doing MUN in my freshman year of high school and ever since then I've thoroughly enjoyed researching and debating all sorts of international issues, within crisis and general assembly settings, from the Venezuelan crisis to the sovereignty of outer space. I've also loved chairing committees at HAMUN, and previously have chaired LEGAL for HAMUN 49 and 48.

Over seven years of MUN experience from high school delegate to now chair, the best part of MUN has always been the same. The experience of learning a different country's position and perspective helped me to understand just a little bit more about our diverse world. In an increasingly globalized society, understanding different perspectives and looking through them with a critical lens is an incredibly valuable skill to have, and one that will pay dividends in the future. The issues we face in the world are numerous and real, but I believe that through cultivating our mutual understanding of the world we can take a small step in the right direction. I hope y'all believe this too.

To that end, I hope that y'all in NATO take this to heart. Our topics of sanctions enforcement and new warfare technology provoke new pressing questions. This includes: How do we balance the fundamental rights and freedoms core to NATO's philosophy with new innovations? How do we unite as a bloc on punishments for those who violate the post-WWII rules-based international order? I urge y'all to consider questions like these and many others like them during this committee and to learn different but important perspectives on these pressing problems.

Bobby Youstra
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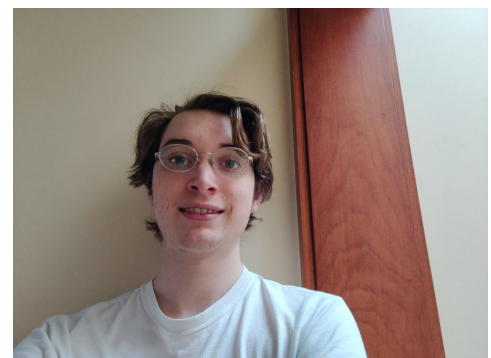
Committee Introduction

NATO was formed in the year 1949 after a transatlantic treaty was signed by 12 founding members with the original goal of promoting allyship and protection from the Soviet Union. This was the first time that the United States had entered a peacetime military alliance with the Eastern Hemisphere. NATO is currently made up of 32 countries in total- 30 of which are in Europe and the other 2 being in North America. NATO's purpose has gradually evolved to a larger scale than just for defending against the Soviet Union. It now strives to protect the security and freedoms of its countries through diplomatic and military means. Politically, NATO promotes democratic beliefs and values and is committed to attempting to reconcile disputes peacefully before taking on more extreme matters of warfare.

Background Information

Executive Summary

In recent years, there has been an exuberant amount of innovation in technology, creating new forms of warfare equipment such as autonomous systems, advanced defense equipment, and new forms of combat including cyber warfare. This rapid innovation has the potential for heinous war crimes and mass unnecessary destruction to occur. As countries continue to develop said technology, it is imperative for NATO to establish general guidelines and limitations regarding new warfare innovation for its members to follow especially during the various wars taking place globally. By establishing guidelines early on, NATO will be able to proactively combat any risks that could arise in relation to new warfare technology. As a committee of some of the most prominent countries globally, and as a committee with a rich history of dissolving conflict, it is imperative that we consider all factors that go into this convoluted topic.

Conceptualization of Topic

Unmanned aircraft, autonomous weapon systems, and space based military technology are all examples of modern mechanics that will be implemented into national conflict. Additionally, a new battlefield for nation-state's, the cyber realm, will introduce a unique type of warfare unlike anything the world has seen before.

It is pivotal to acknowledge that by using autonomous weaponry and other weapons similar, it will be easier for militaries to devalue human life. Just by commanding a machine to do something, it will, with no rational thought being put into it. While it is great for reducing military casualties, it could also result in a greater civilian number of casualties in direct proportion to warfare. However, as countries face a lack in military registration, A.I provides an alternative for the lack of manpower.

Additionally, there are many environmental implications for the increased use of A.I. NATO has been a leading group in fighting against climate change for years now. NATO released the Secretary General's Annual Climate Change and Security Impact Assessment which emphasizes the need for NATO to remain steadfast in its action to prevent the ever-prevalent challenge of climate change. A single ChatGPT use uses more energy than a single google search. A.I directly impacts carbon emissions which in turn further the issue of climate change.

History

The war between Russia and Ukraine has been a primary battleground for new warfare technology that utilizes A.I. Robot and drone innovations have been incorporated into weapons at an increasing rate beginning in the 1960s. In the past, a crew was still required to utilize this type of weaponry, however it is now no longer necessary

Aerial drones have been used on both sides of the war. Said drones were developed by the United Kingdom and United States of America during WW1. The U.K created a radio based drone while the U.S created the Kettering Bug, an Aerial Torpedo. Drones have begun to be more prevalent in warfare, being utilized as cameras to surveil enemy behavior, and even as a weapon.

Between Russia and Ukraine, drones have further been adapted to suit warfare needs. They can be utilized as sensors or effectors within satellite systems that can solve tasks such as "providing real-time reconnaissance of a whole section of the frontline, even if individual units fail or are rendered nonfunctioning (e.g., shot down)" (Cepa,2024)


The Kettering Bug

History

In 2017, Vladimir Putin, President of Russia, addressed students at a Moscow university in a speech. He emphasized that whatever country becomes the leader in A.I research and development will become " the leader of the world." Additionally, Russia has become a leader in cyber attacks upon countries like the U.S by utilizing A.I and social media to create mass amounts of disinformation and misinformation for the American public to interact with.

A.I is still in the beginning stages of development. The majority of it can only be used for "narrow" purposes rather than more general purposes. Originally, international efforts to prevent further research from certain military weapons were driven by 4 rationales: safety, stability, ethicality, While A.I raises concern in all of these categories, it is accessible to the general population and not used entirely for "unethical" purposes, which convolutes the issue even more so.
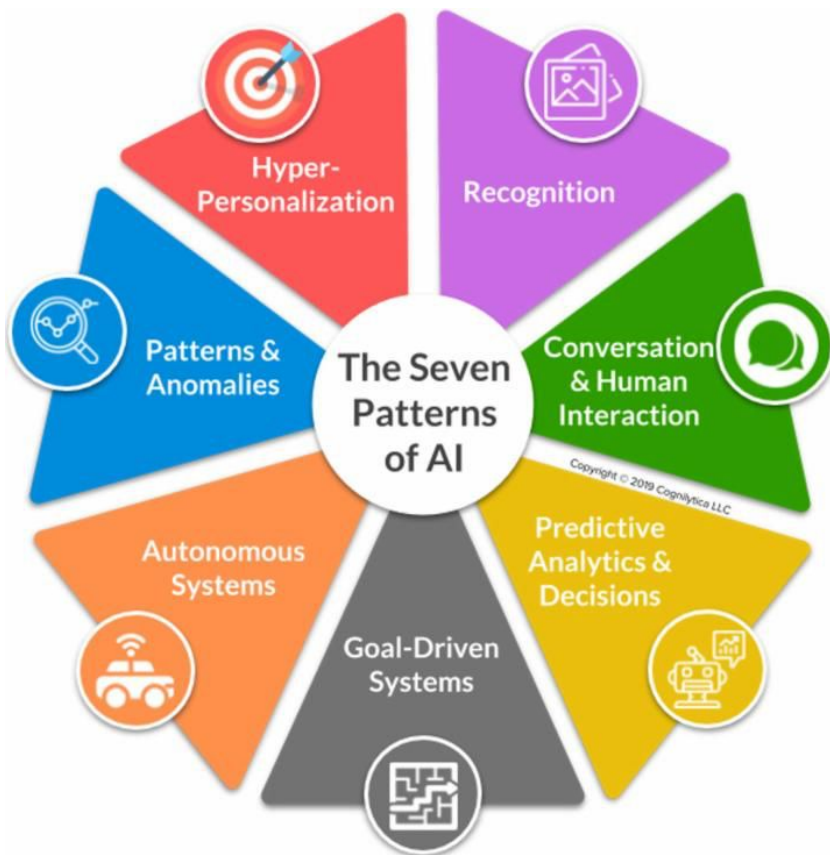
All applications of Artificial Intelligence fall into seven common patterns, shown in this diagram. © Cognilytica

Case Examples

In 2024, NATO revised their 2021 plan for AI usage. The plan outlines using AI in a defensive way. NATO states that they will work with the allies to successfully implement and develop AI into defense and society as a whole. NATO acknowledges that they must use these kinds of technologies as soon as they can. In the strategic context portion of their plan, it reads "NATO's 2021 AI Strategy set out a Strategic Vision, with four Aims and six Outcomes. Within the AI Strategy, Allies endorsed six Principles of Responsible Use (PRUs) for AI in Defence, i.e. Lawfulness, Responsibility and Accountability, Explainability and Traceability, Reliability, Governability and Bias Mitigation." This plan aimed to promote the sustainable and ethical use of A.I by NATO and their allies. It also seeks to promote quality data being put into artificial intelligence systems to ensure the systems quality.

NATO has also established the A.I is an EDT, or an emerging and disruptive technology. They also assert that such technology can cause militarily and domestic threats by nation and foreign actors. This is primarily due to the pervasive nature A.I has taken in society, from being in phones and computers to software utlized by businesses. In 2022, NATO defense ministers endorsed the "Foster and Protect: NATO's Coherent Implementation Strategy on Emerging and Disruptive Technologies." This plan outlines the strategies that will be implemented by participating nations in response to EDTs. Its two areas of focus were trying to make new innovations dual purpose (have domestic and defensive uses), and creating a community in which the Allies will help one another be protected by hostile use of said technology by other nation states.

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Questions to Consider

- To what extent should artificial intelligence be used in supplement or replacement of real human labor in warfare?
- What ethical boundaries should be imposed to prevent human casualties?
- In what ways could advanced technology pose a threat to national security?
- What should be the role of human decision making and control in warfare if autonomous systems continue to increase in prevalence?

Appendix and Sources

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