

In this discussion all that I want to do is pull out three themes that run through your work and that to me are vital to any discussion of automated weapons and the future of warfare. The first of these is **technology**, the second one is **the tension between impunity and what you refer to, following Walzer as *radical responsibility***, and the third one is what I think of as **an Arendtian theme of thinking as the most necessary human activity**. Let me now say something about each of those and possibly raise some questions.

The first issue is technology. You say in your book: "We walk in the time of robots. Artificial intelligence resides in our weapon systems, and it flies, drives and sails with us regularly... If it is possible that we have allowed ourselves into the place we are today without much debate and introspection, is it possible we are capable of doing the same as our technological capabilities increase?" (Riza 2013: 22). You say that the answer to this question is a resounding yes. You then offer this striking quote from the Department of Defence *Unmanned Systems Roadmap*: "When the procurement of unmanned systems threaten manned systems budgets or career paths of manned systems operators, the manned systems invariably win out due to vocal and forceful remonstrations by the threatened communities. Unmanned systems offer yet largely unseen operational capabilities, and these pockets of resistance need to be addressed and eliminated, for the overall good of the Joint Force." (Riza 2013: 23).

So, what we are facing is a runaway process of technological development, where new systems are being designed with the view towards ever more efficient warfare, and our thinking, not to mention laws and policies are lagging behind. We have this extraordinary increase in technological capability but the normative framework has not caught up. Doubt and resistance is not only not to be entertained, it is to be actively quashed. And indeed many of us who study security technologies worry about this. The question on my mind is if we can we perhaps think about what exactly are the factors that are inhibiting our reflection? Is it possible that there are powerful agents who have an interest in the Department of the Defense NOT questioning unmanned systems? War after all, as you allude to in your book as well, is not just politics

by other means, but it is also business, so is it possible that there are specific forces that promote the embrace of the high tech military by politicians, and possibly distort how the public sees it?

The second issue is the tension between impunity and responsibility. Responsibility is a concept that I have been particularly interested in my own work. It seems that we live in a time when responsibility is constantly invoked in quite contradictory ways. It can have different meanings—we can be responsible in the sense that we shoulder the blame for something that we did wrong; or we can be responsible in the sense that we have a duty to act in a certain way or refrain from doing certain things. In the civilian world it is contested concept, but I imagined that in the military with its strict hierarchies it would be less ambiguous. Your discussion of impunity sheds a whole new light on this problem. So the question I have here is about that: who ought to be considered responsible, in the moral, not necessarily legal sense, in those dozens of cases where the deployment of automated weapons leads to civilian deaths or when the wrong targets are struck? What is the role of the commanders, what is the role of system designers? This discussion should be connected to the question of what constitutes ‘meaningful human control’, as touched upon in the abstract of our conference, and as discussed by Lucy Suchman in the Introduction to our event [\[link\]](#).

My final point concerns the necessity of deliberate thought. I was struck by the passage in your book where you were told by a senior Department of Defence official that “we don’t ask our privates to read Kant and ruminate on the ethics on waging war.” That is, I suppose, fair enough. You also say also that you are pretty pessimistic about the possibility that your argument could influence policy making. But I still wonder, and want to hear from you as someone who does read Kant and who cares deeply about preserving what is human in war, if you can think of any strategy of challenging the kinds of policy decisions that appear to already have been made.