British Pugwash/ Institute for Conflict, Cooperation and Security (ICCS), University of Birmingham

The ethics of military robotics: developing international agreement on ethical principles relating to the military exploitation of modern ICT.

Following a suggestion by John Finney at the 2012 meeting of the UNESCO World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Information and Technology (COMEST), on which International Pugwash has an *ex officio* seat, British Pugwash organised a two-day expert scoping workshop to examine the ethical implications of current and possible future developments in modern military robotics. Funding for the project was generously provided by Network for Social Change, the Marmot Trust and the Birmingham University Institute of Advanced Studies.

The workshop was held on 20-22 March 2013 at the University of Birmingham, hosted locally by the newly-formed Institute for Conflict, Cooperation and Security (ICCS) (directed by Nick Wheeler, previously at the David Davies Memorial Institute, Aberystwyth), who also assisted with the organization and funding.

The workshop was an excellent, stimulating event. It brought together an impressive interdisciplinary core group of fourteen international experts in the fields of ethics, humanitarian and human rights law, international relations, philosophy, psychology, computer engineering and physics. Attention focused on examining the ethical issues and dangers surrounding three different application areas: (i) civilian (including policing and terrorism), (ii) remotely controlled robot weapons, (iii) autonomous robot weapons. Most generally, it concluded that:
- the rapidity in the growth of the service robotics industry is indeed leaving a gap between the effective use of the technology and its ethical application.
- in all three of the application areas discussed, there is an urgent need of further research and ethical assessment if we are to ensure that the human rights of those subjected to the use of these technologies are protected.

A report of the workshop has been sent to COMEST and the item will be on the agenda of its next meeting in Bratislava at the end of May 2013. In addition, following that meeting, COMEST have organised an international conference on Emerging Ethical Issues in Science and Technology, one session of which (organised jointly with Pugwash) will be based on the outcome of the Birmingham workshop.

A full report on the Birmingham workshop is in preparation and will be published jointly with ICCS.

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