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The exasperating debate on the legality of unmanned systems : time for a realistic approach / Wolff Heintschel von Heinegg

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Abstract:	<p>This article typologizes international law's treatment of unmanned systems, which the author defines to include remote-controlled or pre-programmed autonomous military devices that are used more than once. The article argues that debates on the legality of unmanned systems focus too heavily on United States military operations and on emerging technologies that have never been used. The author advocates for a sober analysis of the relevant law that does not seek to justify individual states' uses of unmanned systems or serve other political aims. The article argues that the diversity of unmanned systems precludes a general assessment of their legality, and highlights the ways different sources of international law may apply, depending on whether the unmanned systems are used in airspace, at sea or on land. If they qualify as means of warfare, the use of unmanned systems is subject to the rules of weapons law and the principles of international humanitarian law, in particular the prohibition of indiscriminate attacks. [Summary by students at the University of Toronto, Faculty of Law (IHRP)]</p>
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