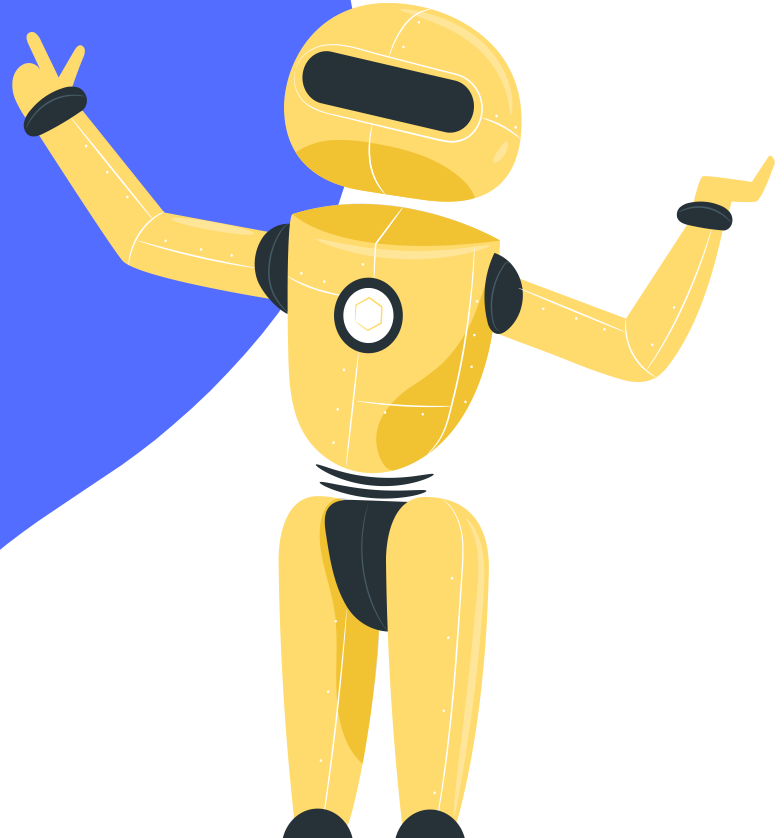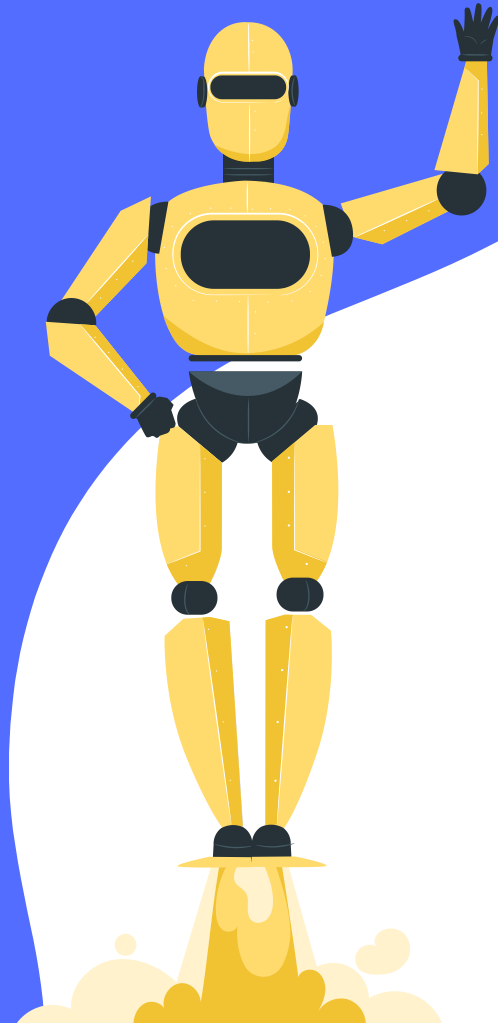# Autonomous weapon systems:
Should they Kill?

Isabella Chojnacki
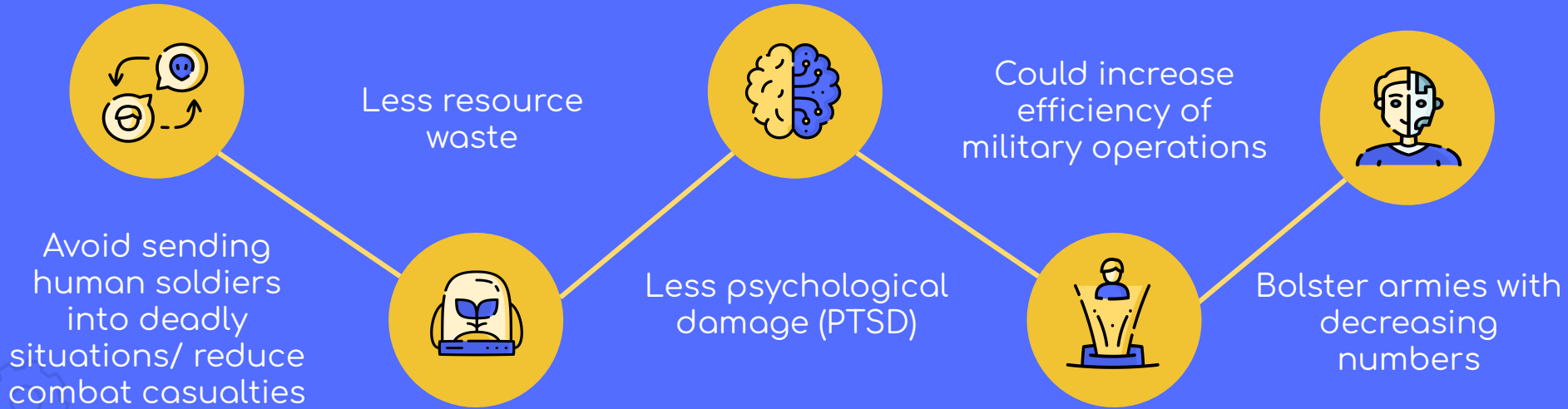
What is an Autonomous Weapon System (AWS)?

- Military weapons that do not need to be remotely controlled
- act unsupervised, adapt to new situations, and learn from their mistakes
- responsible for identifying targets, navigating towards targets, positioning, aiming, firing, and reloading their weapons without any outside human intervention

The Aegis Combat System

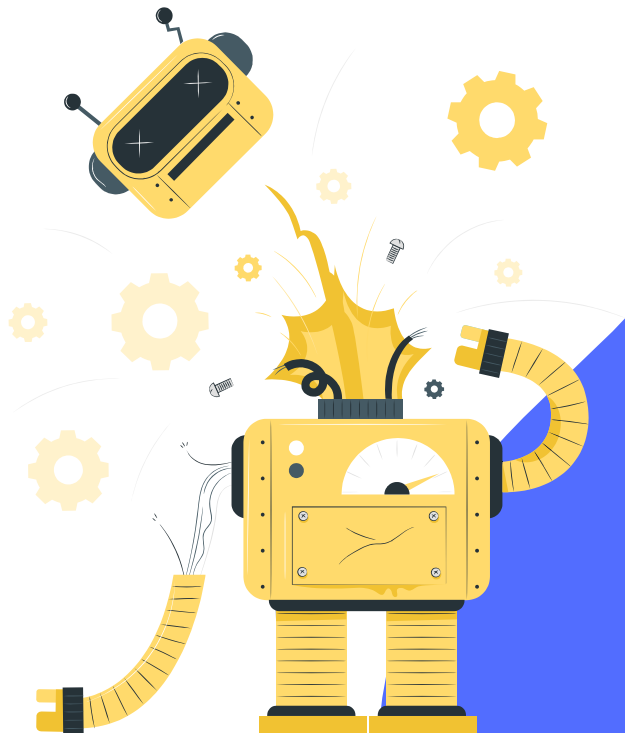# Advantages of Using AWS in War

Less resource waste

Avoid sending human soldiers into deadly situations/ reduce combat casualties

Less psychological damage (PTSD)

Could increase efficiency of military operations

Bolster armies with decreasing numbers

Problems with Using AWS in War

- Potential malfunctions
- Loss of human dignity
- Aspect of deciding who can authorize its activation
- Technology can be stolen and used against the original deployers
- Hard to retaliate against AWS

Ethical Theories

- Utilitarianism
- John Rawls Veil of Ignorance
- Objectivism

Utilitarianism

What is it?

- When action leads to a societies net gain in happiness it is ethically justified
- No individuals benefits are more or less important that anyone else's
- What will have the best consequences for everyone?

Implications

- Increase in civilian or soldier casualties → unethical
- Decrease in civilian or soldier casualties → ethical
- Increase in one and decrease in the other → uncertain without real casualty numbers/ data

John Rawls Veil of Ignorance

What is it?

- The idea that a decision maker will not know their race, ethnicity, age, gender, income, etc.
- Does not allow the decision maker to know who they are in the situation

Implications

- The decision maker could be using AWS or fighting against AWS
- Personally, I would not want to be in a position of fighting AWS making its use unethical

Objectivism

What is it?

- People should act in their own self-interest and promote their own well-being
- People should think rationally
- Self serving but not at the expense of others

Implications

- Acting in self interest one would claim it ethical to use AWS so they do not have to go to war
- However, this may be seen as being at the expense of others making it unethical

Conclusion

- Using Utilitarianism AWS can be ethical or unethical depending on the number of deaths
- Using the Veil of Ignorance AWS is unethical because you would not want to fight AWS
- Using Objectivism AWS is unethical because it would be self serving but at the expense of others