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LETHAL AUTONOMOUS WEAPON SYSTEM (LAWS)

Anubhav Singh
Law Graduate, Army Institute of Law, Mohali
Naaz Puri
B.A. LL.B. 5th year, Army Institute of Law, Mohali

INTRODUCTION

The 21st century has seen considerable technological advancements. The arena of security and warfare has experienced extraordinary progress due to technological developments such as artificial intelligence ("AI"), nanotechnology, machine learning, robotics, and so on, which have altered the dynamics of security and combat. These technologies will offer a decisive and exponential advantage in modern combat.[1]

The Azerbaijan-Armenia, Russia-Ukraine, and Israel Hamas conflicts have brought global attention to the use of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) in warfare, including the use of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS). The development of LAWS is widely regarded as third revolution in warfare, following the inventions of gunpowder and nuclear weapons.

The fundamental idea behind LAWS is that once built and activated, it will use AI, machine learning, sensors, and complicated algorithms to identify, search, hunt, and attack targets without the need for human participation. LAWS mark a significant evolution from traditional weaponry, promising increased efficiency and speed in decision-making on the battlefield but also raising complex ethical and legal questions about the future of warfare. Their development and potential

[1] Brigadier Saurabh Tewari, "*Impact of Disruptive technologies on warfare*," CLAWS-Issue Brief No. 185, June18, (2019).

deployment continue to be subjects of intense debate and scrutiny within the global defence community. As of now, no government in the world has succeeded in constructing a fully autonomous weapon system; nevertheless, rapid innovation has made thisa distinct possibility for the near future. But, these are used for protection and as preventive measures to deflect incoming attacks. These systems do not actively look for and attack the target, but rather respond to prepared threats. The concerns around equipping machines with the capability to autonomously select and engage targets have led the international community to convene a global discussion on this issue. In 2016, the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on LAWS was established under the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) at the United Nations (UN). As a party to the CCW, India has been an active participant at the GGE. It also chaired the forum in 2017 and 2018, when the eleven guiding principles on LAWS were being developed. Now that India is planning to build autonomous systems for its security needs, assessing its normative position on this matter assumes significance.[2]

DEFINITION

Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems (LAWS) is a modern technology where a very wide power and autonomy is there in decision making. Such technologies are a proof as to how we have evolved from traditional weapon system i.e., where humans were directly involved in decision making. LAWS is a wide term and has not been given any definition that is internationally accepted but a distinguishing feature which helps in understanding this military class technology independently searches , identifies, and then independently engages targets without human intervention. Thus, also called as Robotic Weapons or Killer Robots.

International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) has defined LAWS as: *'any weapon system with autonomy in its critical functions—that is, a weapon system that can select (search for,*

[2] Dinakar Peri, Autonomous systems becoming preferred choice in Order of Battle for nations across the globe: Navy Chief, The Hindu, Jan 10, 2024.

detect, identify, track or select) and attack (use force against, neutralize, damage or destroy) targets without human intervention.'[3]

To be categorized as LAWS, weapons must be autonomous and de-fact out-of-the-loop in crucial functions after being triggered by human involvement, regardless of whether humans are present on the loop in the master plan.[4]

CHARACTERISTICS OF LETHAL AUTONOMOUS WEAPON

- Autonomous Target Selection: LAWS use pre-established data, and criteria that assess enormous volumes of data and independently find the possible targets.
- Self-sufficiency in Operation: They are designed in such a way that they can operate independently and are self-sufficient in themselves. They are made to function in complex environments and can even make prompt decisions without any human or remote control.
- Independent Engagement Capability: LAWS are autonomous and can even function without any human intervention. They locate their targets and can engage without any human involvement, thus, providing whole control in hands of a machine.

EXAMPLES WHEN LETHAL AUTONOMOUS WEAPONS SYSTEMS HAVE BEEN USED

The deployment of LAWS in various conflicts has increased manifold and its usage can be seen in the following instances:

1. Libyan Conflict: A Turkish-made, Kargu 2 kamikaze "hunted down and remotely engaged" soldiers of Hafter Affiliated Forces in Libyan conflict on March 8, 2021. This autonomous weapon used the true 'fire, forget and find' capability as "these weapons systems were programmed to attack targets without requiring data connectivity between

[3] United Nations, UNODA Occasional Paper No. 30. "*A Legal Perspective: Autonomous weapon systems under International Humanitarian Law- by ICRC.*"

[4] Adrianne Jeffries, Only Five Countries Actually Want to Ban Killer Robots, VERGE, Nov 10, 2025.

the operator and the munition."[5]

2. Targeted Elimination of High-Profile Figures:

- *Jihadi John*: The *MQ-9 Reaper drone* played a crucial role in the elimination of Mohammed Emwazi, [6] widely known as Jihadi John, a member of ISIS.
- *Qasem Soleimani*: Another notable use of the MQ-9 Reaper was used again in 2020 in the targeted killing of Qasem Soleimani, the commander of the Iranian Quds Force. Sulemani was killed in a Hellfire missile strike fired by MQ-9 Reaper drones at Baghdad International Airport. [7]

3. Middle Eastern Conflicts: In regions like Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria, autonomous drones have been extensively used for surveillance and targeted strikes, particularly in the counter terrorism operations.

- Israeli Defence Systems: Israel's use of systems like the *Iron Dome* and *Harpy drones* demonstrates the defensive capabilities of LAWS. They use AI-supported radars, where this system detects missiles, prioritizes those posing a threat and intercept them mid-air.[8]

LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR LETHAL AUTONOMOUS WEAPONS SYSTEM

Despite LAWS being a relatively new development, inter-governmental discussions on LAWS are not taking place in vacuum. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) in its 1996 Advisory Opinion on the Legality and Threat or Use of nuclear

[5] Emily Stanfield, Branka Marijan, "Kargu-2 debate raises awareness of autonomous weapons," (2021).

[6] Ben Quinn, Richard Norton-Taylor, and Alice Ross, "Mohammed Emwazi Killed in Raqqa Strike, Says Rights Group," The Guardian, November 13, 2015, UK news, https://www.theguardian.com/uk- news/2015/nov/13/jihadi-john-definitely-killed-syriaraqqa-dead. (last visited on 1st November, 2025).

[7] Russ Read, "World's Most Feared Drone: CIA's MQ-9 Reaper Killed Soleimani," Washington Examiner, January 3, 2020, https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/policy/defense-national-security/worlds-most-feared-drone-cias-mq-9-reaper-killedsoleimani. Accessed on 9 Nov 2025.

[8] Ian Slesinger, "A Strange Sky: Security Atmospheres and the Technological Management of Geopolitical Conflict in the Case of Israel's Iron Dome", Wiley, The Geographical Journal, Volume: 188, Issue: 3, (2022), p. 429-443.

weapons was clear, that International Humanitarian Law (IHL) "permeates the entire law of armed conflict and applies to all forms of warfare and to all kinds of weapons, those of the past, those of the present and those of the future."[9]

International humanitarian law requires all weapons to be usable and follow its regulations [10] under these rules, weapons can either be unlawful per se or can be used in an unlawful manner. The two rules under which weapons can be per se unlawful are –

- Means or methods of warfare that cause superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering are prohibited [11]

Implication- The first rule explains why blinding lasers that cause permanent blindness are banned per se as are perceived to cause 'superfluous injury,' they cause suffering without any military purpose. Other examples include weapons that have the effect of injuring through non- detectable fragments which ordinarily cannot be detected using X-rays and hence, cannot be treated and cause suffering. The ICJ has also noted that this prohibition ensures that "States do not have unlimited freedom of choice of means in the weapons they use"[12], as well as declared the rule as one of the "cardinal principles contained in the texts constituting the fabric of international humanitarian law"

- Weapons that are by nature indiscriminate, i.e., weapons that cannot be targeted at a specific military objective, are prohibited [13]

Implication- The second rule covers anti-personnel mines, which does not discriminate between combatants and civilians. These mines can also remain active for a long time even after the end of the conflict, and endanger civilians. Weapons that are not themselves rendered unlawful by the rule against causing

[9] Legality of the Threat or Use of nuclear weapons, Advisory Opinion, 1. C.J. Reports 1996 ("Legality of theThreat or Use of Nuclear Weapons"), para 86.

[10] Neil Davison, 'A Legal Perspective: Autonomous Weapon Systems under International Humanitarian Law' (International Committee of the Red Cross) UNODA Occasional Papers No 307.

[11] Art 35(2), Additional Protocol II.

[12] Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons (n 26), para 78.

[13] Art 51(4), Additional Protocol I.

superfluous injury and the prohibition on indiscriminate weapons, can still be used unlawfully, if used in violation of certain principles - the principles of distinction, proportionality and precautions inattack.[14]

TO BAN OR NOT TO BAN? SOME LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

As of November 2018, 28 states have advocated for a ban on fully autonomous weapons while some developed states, notably Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, are opposedto any pre-emptive ban.[15] On the other hand, there are people who also believe that a pre-emptive ban is not required.

Human Right Watch's (HRW) *Losing Humanity report* claims that fully autonomous weapons are illegal because they cannot adhere to key principles of international humanitarian law, including distinction, proportionality, military necessity, and the Martens Clause.[16]

1. DISTINCTION

The principle of distinction requires distinguishing between the civilian population and the combatants as well as between civilian objects and military objectives and ensuring action only against military objectives.[17]

A legal consideration that needs to be taken in consideration is that these fully autonomous weapons possess is the power to distinguish between soldiers and harmless civilians especially in a modern combatant environment. E.g.- how will they be able to stop themselves in engaging or executing if they see a child carrying a toy gun as in accordance to their programme they would see the gun as a threat , and thus, unable to distinguish.

To answer this doubt, Michael Schmitt, a professor at the US Naval War College says that in order to solve this one should deploy these fully autonomous weapons only in purely military battle fields, where civilian presence is highly unlikely, such as naval warships, or remote parts of a desert. [18]

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[14] Davison (n 30) 7.

[15] 'Country Views on Killer Robots' (Campaign to Stop Killer Robots 2018).

[16] Bonnie Docherty, Losing Humanity, The Case against killer robots, Nov 19, 2022.

[17] Geneva Convention, Additional Protocol 1, art. 48.

[18] Schmitt (n 6) 11.

But still we need to understand that these machines, especially when without human intervention can also go wrong and the damage that they cause is irreparable, costing us innocent lives.

1. PROPORTIONALITY

The principle of proportionality refers to the rule that legitimate target may not be attacked if the collateral civilian casualties would be disproportionate to the specific military gain from the attack. [19] This can be understood from several provisions in Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions of 1949.

Further, according to the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), proportionality of an attack is determined by whether a reasonably well-informed person in the perpetrator's circumstances could have expected excessive civilian casualties based on available information[20].

It needs to be understood that what is required to maintain proportionality is human judgement and intervention. We cannot leave the lives of civilians as well as combatants in the hands of simple algorithms or software's knowing that there is no human judgement to explain as to what is right or wrong.

2. MILITARY NECESSITY

The principle of precautions in attack refers to the obligation upon those who plan or decide upon an attack to take certain active precautions including verification to ensure the objectives are military, choosing means and methods to minimize incidental civilian injury and refrainingfrom launching an attack that would be in breach of the principle of proportionality.[21] These principles place obligations upon combatants, who will also be liable for violations thereof.

These completely autonomous weapons will conflict with military necessity. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) defines military necessity asactions required for a legitimate military goal that are not banned by international

[19] Legality of Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons (n 26), p. 587.

[20] Prosecutor v Stanislav Gali, International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of Former Yugoslavia since 1991 (ICTY), Case No. IT-98-29-T, Judgment and Opinion, December 5, 2003, para. 58.

[21] 1 Dinstein (n 37) 125.

humanitarian law.[22]

3. MARTENS CLAUSE

A Russian professor, Von Martens (1899 Russian delegation member to Hague Peace Conference), introduced a clause named after him. The Martens Clause states that in instances not covered by current treaties, civilians and combatants are protected by customary International Humanitarian Law, humanitarian standards, and public conscience. [23] This clause serves as a bridge for assessing ethical considerations and the humanitarian standards.

4. WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

What we need to understand is that over reliance on technology cannot be made and human intervention is required to an extent to understand right and wrong. Countries are adopting an approach where human control along with an attempt to identify mechanisms in IHL is made.

Japan has stated that it has no plans to develop fully autonomous military systems.[24] The US has also stated that it feels human engagement is necessary.[25] This has led to the introduction of the concept of meaningful human control over weapons systems and an attempt to identify mechanisms in IHL, such as those under Article 36 of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions, to allow for the controlled development of LAWS that comply with IHL.

HUMAN CONTROL

The notion of maintaining human oversight has existed since the unofficial expert gatherings in 2014.[26] It appears that states concur that granting weapons systems complete autonomy would not be in line with IHL or technical knowledge. As a

[22] Military Necessity | How Does Law Protect in War? - (ICRC).
[23] Art 1(2), Additional Protocol I
[24] Possible Outcome of 2019 GGE and Future Actions of International Community on LAWS - Working Paperto the Group of Governmental Experts Meeting of 2019 Submitted by Japan' (Government of Japan).
[25] Department of Defence Directive, 3000.09
[26] CCW/MSP. Report of the 2014 Informal Meeting of Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS)' (2014) 2014/3 para 35.

result, there is an "effective consensus" stating that human control is necessary. Nowadays, the phrase "meaningful human control" and its variants, including "effective human control," have acquired significance, embracing concepts like "human-in-the-loop" and "human-on-the-loop." Moreover, the ICRC has demanded maintaining meaningful human control on weaponry systems.

India also confirmed that "human control must be maintained over all weapons systems," including LAWS.[27] In its statement to the 2019 GGE on the human aspect in the use of lethal force. In addition, India stated that complete autonomy with no oversight or communication link is explicitly prohibited because it "contradicts the essential operational tenets of making decisions using operational control and situational awareness by the commander. Additionally, India declared its belief in human-in-the-loop was "perfect," but rapid response systems might require oversight from at least people in the loop.

India has been actively addressing LAWS, with Ambassador Amandeep Gill, India's permanent representative to the Conference, chairing the 2017 GGE session. At home, India established a multi-stakeholder task force under the Ministry of Defense to examine the strategic implications of artificial intelligence for national security and defence, whose terms of responsibility include recommendations for the employment of both defensive and offensive AI in many domains includes aircraft, naval, land systems, cyber, and nuclear. The NITI Aayog also recently released the National Strategy on Artificial Intelligence, setting out India's goals vis à-vis AI capabilities and mapping the path to reach them.[28] India aims to use LAWS technology in a way that reflects its unique experiences as a global south country.

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[27] Statement by India: Further Consideration of the Human Element in the Use of Lethal Force; Aspects of Human Machine Interaction in the Development, Deployment and Use of Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems' (2019).

[28] National Strategy on Artificial Intelligence (June, 2018), Yogima Sharma, 'Niti Aayog Proposes Rs 7,500-Crore Plan for Artificial Intelligence Push' the Economic Times (20 May 2019).

Some countries have expressed different views. The United States, although agreeing that human involvement is necessary, believes that terms such as "control" may not be helpful.[29]

Russia for its part has also acknowledged that human control over the operation of such systems is an "important limiting factor."[30] Australia [31] seems to have a similar understanding of control to the legal review procedure outlined in Additional Protocol I's Article 36.

The Indian government has stated that it will not hesitate to "cross border(s)" or "take steps to disrupt" operations against it.[32] The Doklam standoff demonstrated India's powerful response to foreign aggression, namely from China.

Despite a focus on defence and national security, India's military spending remains lower than that of China, Russia, and the US. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute reportsthat China has increased its military spending the most over the last decade. It increased by over 83% in China, compared to just 29% in India. Despite a 17% reduction in military spending over the previous decade, the United States remains the world's greatest spender, paying more than twice as much as China.

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[29] United States, 'Human-Machine Interaction in the Development, Deployment and Use of Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (Working Paper)' (Group of Governmental Experts of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects 2018) CCW/ GGE.2/2018/WP.4 para 43.

[30] Russian Federation, 'Potential Opportunities and Limitations of Military Uses of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (Working Paper)' (Group of Governmental Experts of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects) CCW/GGE.1/2019/WP.1 7.

[31] Australia, 'Australia's System of Control and Applications for Autonomous Weapon Systems (Working Paper)'(Group of Governmental Experts of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects) para 7.

[32] PTI, 'India Took Steps to Disrupt Terror Activities, will not Hesitate to do so Again: Nirmala Sitharaman' The Economic Times (20 October 2018).

According to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence (2017-18), Pakistan spent more on defence than India, accounting for 3.3% of GDP.

India would be in a better position if it makes use of LAWS in a more appropriate way. India cannot afford to invest resources in an unwinnable LAWS race and should customize LAWS development to fit its specific needs.

LETHAL AUTONOMOUS WEAPONS SYSTEM AS A SOLUTION TO INDIAN BORDER WOES

The Pathankot, Balakot, and Doklam episodes not only signaled a change in India's national security strategy, but they also made clear that the country's frontiers continue to be its greatest security vulnerability, with two or more less hostile nations on either side.

India's borders are among the worlds most militarized. The total length of India's international land border is 15,106.7 kms, in which the border with Pakistan is 3,323 kms long and the border with China is 3,488 kms long. [33] Other significant land borders include the Indo-Myanmar border which is 1,643 kms and the Indo-Bangladesh border which is 4,096.7 kms.[34] To guard these borders, India employs the world's largest border security force ("BSF") consisting of over 2.5 million personnel.

The Department-Related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs has also observed and voiced its distress that the BSF jawans frequently lack access to basic amenities due to a system that prevents them from getting enough sleep due to a personnel shortage. This leads to an increase in the number of BSF employees and an increase in pay and benefits, both of which increase the amount of money coming into the defence budget percentage in addition to postponing modernisation initiatives. Technology can counteract this.

The Indian army currently has the world's largest ground force.[35]

[33] 'International Land Borders' https://mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/BMIntro-1011.pdf, (last visited on 14th Nov, 2024)

[34] *Ibid*

[35] Snehesh Alex Philip, 'Indian Army Now World's Largest Ground Force as

China, which until recently had the largest army, has massively downsized its own forces in a strong modernization push started in 2015 and has now reportedly cut its ground forces by half.

This is where India can take advantage of the force-multiplier effect of autonomous weapons.[36] They can easily supplement border patrol forces such as the BSF in surveillance and detection. Larger aircraft like the MQ-1B Predator, for instance, can track terrorists and their movement. The RQ-11 Raven, a smaller, hand-launched drone originally developed for the US military, can provide patrolling troops with reconnaissance on demand.

A deployment of several of South Korea's SGR-A1 Sentry Guard Robots would also be immensely useful in patrolling both dangerous and long borders such as the Indo-Pakistan border. Israel has used armed ground robots to patrol its Gaza border.[37] Such robots can be programmed to always have human's in-the-loop as well, defusing any possibility of them going rogue.

Some movement in this direction is already taking place. India is already focusing on increasing automation, if not autonomy. The Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System (CIBMS) which has been described as involving "deployment of a range of state-of-the-art surveillance technologies — thermal imagers, infra-red and laser-based intruder alarms, aerostats for aerial surveillance, unattended ground sensors that can help detect intrusion bids, radars, sonar systems to secure riverine borders, fiber-optic sensors and a command and control system that shall receive data from all surveillance devices in real time." Two pilot projects along the Indo-Pakistan border, the Indo-Bangladesh border as well as in Jammu are reportedly operationalized.[38]

China Halves Strength on Modernisation Push' The Print (17 March 2020.

[36] Trisha Ray, 'Beyond the "Lethal" in Lethal Autonomous Weapons: Applications of LAWS in Theatres of Conflict for Middle Powers' [2018] ORF Occasional Paper No. 180 26, 4–6.

[37] Paul Scharre, Army of None - Autonomous Weapons and the Future of War (WW Norton & Company).

[38] 'Union Home Minister Launches Smart Fencing on Indo-Bangladesh Border, an Effective Deterrence against Illegal Infiltration' (Press Information

India's approach to civilian AI would likewise be in line with a careful approach to the development and use of LAWS in accordance with its own particular demands. Regarding this, the NITI Aayog has lately argued in favour of adopting an AI strategy that is inclusive, sustainable, and adapted to India's particular circumstances. Despite focusing solely on the civilian use of AI, the conversation "National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence #AIFORALL" is a paper that has highlighted industries where AI development in India should be concentrated, including smart cities and infrastructure, healthcare, agriculture, education, and smart transportation. Given India's large digital divide and social inequities, this is important.

A WAY FORWARD

Since the dawn of humanity, technology has shaped battle rather than actual conflict. Throughout history, military innovation has been the main source of technology and the main force influencing conflict.

Since this LAWS debate is still in its early phases, it is broad and ambiguous. It is necessary to deal with the laws in a realistic manner. Before delving into a thorough discussion of individual components, the international community must first create a functioning definition. Even though numerous countries have already started developing the technology needed for LAWS, the discussion of a regulatory framework is being delayed by the lack of consensus on a working definition.

Significant progress has already been achieved in this area by numerous major powers. GGE currently confronts additional challenges in addition to the current issues. These issues could include: (1) a delay in the process because there is disagreement about specific technology; (2) the sharing and abuse of technology by non-state actors is outside the scope of this discussion; and (3) IHL merely improves the current framework. Fourth, the argument only addresses weapons and their use in armed conflict, leaving out other legal frameworks

like criminal law, human rights, product liability, and so forth. The use and advantages in other facets of security and peacekeeping operations, however, are not being covered.

At every stage of LAWS development, testing, deployment, and use, an ideal set of laws would include specific standards and permissible boundaries. If the regulation incorporated suitable accountability standards and an obligatory national legal review system, this would be effective. Fighting the trade and spread of such technology is equally crucial. Since these technologies are still in their infancy, it would be premature and wrong to completely prohibit the idea because they offer a number of advantages for both the military and the general public.

CONCLUSION

Autonomous weaponry, whether lethal or not, is inevitable. An express ban will help promote the international legal principles that prohibit killing by fully autonomous robotic weapons. While not a necessity-because natural law norms apply now to prohibit LAWS- a ban can educate technologists and those acquiring their inventions as the dark facts of AI become known. We already know "that the current state of the art models is not safe and no one knows how to reliably make them safe."[39]

The difficulties in applying IHL will no doubt be hard to overcome. But this is not the first time existing law is being interpreted to accommodate new and possibly unfathomable technologies, as the International Court of Justice also noted in the famous Advisory Opinion on Nuclear Weapons case.

The fact that States are already giving these matters careful thought and voicing their opinions is a healthy trend. Even though some States have already deployed autonomous weapons, very few of them really do. These States have not made a firm step towards autonomy. Therefore, in this regard, the law could not be too far behind technology, and the legal doctrines that develop from these continuing debates can assist in both informing and control the development of self-sufficient

[39] Paul Scharee, "AI's Gatekeepers are not prepared for what is coming *"Foreign Policy*, June 2023.

weapons. That is the final objective of the talks between governments about self-sufficient weapons.

Both cyber power and weaponization of AI are changing the face of modern warfare.[40] With regard to India's role in the larger scheme of autonomous weaponry, her active participation in the Group of Governmental Experts is heartening. But any claims of her playing a major leading role would, for the foreseeable future, be exaggerated. India is already lagging behind the United States and China, in defence expenditure and more importantly, defence modernization.

India is not even among the top rivals in the AI race, save from defence technology. In contrast, China is competing with the US in terms of research and the quantity of AI-related publications in scholarly journals. Defence experts have also expressed the view that there is a "void in terms of doctrines and perspective plans when it comes to exploitation of AI / robotics technologies.[41] The government's top military research and development organisation, the Defence Research and Development Organisation, is likewise thought to be insufficient and unlikely to deliver relevant results in a timely manner. The CIBMS program is one phase of the India's defence modernisation is moving in the right direction, but it will be gradual. Protracted procurement procedures impede quick advancement.

On the whole, it seems likely that the dust around the issue of autonomous weapons is not going to settle for a while yet. This is because no matter how much the law can try and regulate its growth, discussions around their legality will continue to be at least partly in the realm of conjecture until LAWS are actually put to use and the consequences become evident.

[40] Ajay Lele, 'Debating Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems' (2019) 13 Journal of Defence Studies 66.

[41] R.S. Panwar, 'Artificial Intelligence in Military Operations: Technology, Ethics and the Indian Perspective' (Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, 31 January 2018).