Third Revolution in Warfare

What is the issue?

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Automated weapons are rapidly growing across the globe which causes anxieties.

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What are Autonomous weapons?

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- Autonomous weapons have been described as the third revolution in warfare, after gunpowder and nuclear arms.
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- These weapons are termed under Lethal Automated Weapons (LAWs).
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- These weapons can select and engage targets without human intervention.
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- They might include armed quadcopters that can search for and eliminate people meeting certain pre-defined criteria.
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How lethal are these weapons?

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- Even Small drones powered by artificial intelligence (AI), could use facial recognition and Internet protocol tracing to track down people by identifying their faces or locating their mobile phones or vehicles.
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- These drones could then kill their targets using tiny explosive charges at close range, leaving bystanders unharmed.
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- Such a device could do its killing, without human intervention or

oversight, if the target parameters were set, but LAW devices can take humans out of the loop at an earlier stage.
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- Such devices could also slaughter huge numbers of civilians or malfunction in disastrous ways.
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- Unlike with landmines or dum-dum bullets, there are no laws prohibiting LAW devices.
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What are the advantages of LAWs?

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- LAWs, can be used as a toned-down versions with tranquillisers or tear gas for law enforcement and riot control.
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- In war, LAWs could save soldiers' lives and be a formidable force multiplier.
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- If selective targeting is possible, these could lead to less collateral damage.
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- LAWs do not need exotic materials, which makes them cost-effective.
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What are the existing uses of LAW?

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- LAW devices are being developed for all sorts of tasks, they are already used in anti-aircraft and anti-missile systems.
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- Israel's Iron Dome autonomously targets and destroys missiles, Germany's Mantis, a group of radar-guided cannons, protects army bases against rocket assaults.
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- Although neither Iron Dome nor Mantis targets people, future systems will.
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- The Samsung Techwin SGR-A1 sentry gun is deployed in the demilitarised

zone (DMZ) between the two Koreas.
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- A much larger LAW is the Sea Hunter, an anti-submarine unmanned weapon, which will be deployed for anti-submarine warfare and mine-sweeping.
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What are the global actions on these weapons?

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- United Nations Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons is seriously debating the threats and prospects of LAWs.
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- Campaign to Stop Killer Robots (CSKR), a movement backed by Human Rights Watch is spreading awareness about these weapons across the globe.
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- The CSKR is one of several coalitions lobbying to pass laws that ban the development and use of “Lethal Autonomous Weapons” (LAWs).
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- India is one among many non-committal nations to ban LAWs. As it senses deploying sentry guns along the borders is a tempting prospect.
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Source: Business Standard

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