Science & Technology · GS - III

“The growing autonomy of weapon systems raises fundamental questions about human control, accountability and international humanitarian law.” Examine the ethical and strategic challenges associated with Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS).

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
DAILY PRACTICE 16/11/2026	GS - III	Science & Technology

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

LAWS, artificial intelligence, meaningful human control, international humanitarian law, distinction, proportionality, accountability, arms race, CCW, global regulation.

Model Answer

Introduction

Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems use artificial intelligence and automated technologies to identify, select and engage targets with varying degrees of human intervention. Their development raises serious legal, ethical and security concerns.

Key Challenges

- **Human control:** Delegating life-and-death decisions to algorithms raises questions about human responsibility.
- **International humanitarian law:** Autonomous systems must comply with distinction, proportionality and precautions in attack.

- **Accountability:** Assigning responsibility for unlawful attacks becomes difficult when decisions involve complex algorithms.
- **Technological risks:** Errors, biased data and cyber manipulation can cause unintended civilian casualties.
- **Strategic instability:** Autonomous weapons may accelerate arms races and reduce decision-making time during conflicts.

Way Forward

- Establish internationally binding rules on prohibited and restricted autonomous weapons.
- Ensure meaningful human control over critical targeting decisions.
- Strengthen transparency, testing and accountability mechanisms.
- Promote multilateral negotiations through the UN and CCW framework.

Conclusion

Technological innovation in warfare must remain subject to humanitarian principles. Effective international regulation is necessary to ensure that human responsibility is not replaced by machine autonomy in decisions involving human life.

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