

Call for Papers

The Promises of Algorithmic Warfare – and Their World-Making Effects

International Conference

Date: 11 - 13 February 2026

Location: University Hamburg, Germany

Abstracts: short abstract (300-400 words) and a short biographical note (100-150 words)

Deadline: October 15th 2025

Artificial intelligence and autonomous weapon systems are increasingly shaping the strategies and tactics of warfare. It is not only current wars, such as those on Ukraine and in Gaza, that contribute to the accelerated development and deployment of algorithmic technologies, but also the promises associated with them: the promise of a technology that is much faster than human agency, and the adversary; whose decision-making is unaffected by emotions, unlike human agency; that is precise and efficient, but also ethical; that guarantees information superiority, and is also accessible to control and legal regulation. Promises are powerful: they shape our imaginations and expectations, and they encourage us to take action and realise our visions. Promises have real-world effects.

The closing conference of our research network, [‘Meaningful Human Control: Autonomous weapon systems between regulation and reflection’](#) critically examines the many promises of algorithmic warfare, their world-making, performative forces as well as their ambiguities, limits and discrepancies. The current discourse is pervaded by buzzwords such as ‘value-based technologies’, ‘human in the loop’ and ‘responsible AI’, which are indicative here: while expressing the ethical demands on the part of the conventional arms industry and start-up technicians, they also appear to echo the values enshrined in international humanitarian law as well as the concerns of human and civil rights organisations and scientific expertise.

We invite submissions that explore the promises, practices, and effects of algorithmic warfare from diverse analytical perspectives. We particularly welcome contributions from: STS, media studies, affect and emotion theory, critical anthropology and postcolonial studies, discourse analysis and literary studies as well as technological and legal perspectives.

We invite contributions engaging with the following themes and questions, among others:

- How do promises of algorithmic warfare circulate and gain traction across military, political, and civilian spheres?
- What realities do these promises create? How do they reshape military doctrine, international law, and civilian life?
- How are concepts like ‘meaningful human control’ negotiated in practice? What forms of agency emerge in algorithmic warfare systems?
- How do algorithmic warfare promises operate differently across the Global North and South? What colonial continuities and ruptures are evident?



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- What emotions, desires, and anxieties do algorithmic warfare promises generate? How do they mobilize support or resistance?
- How do legal frameworks attempt to govern algorithmic warfare? What gaps and contradictions emerge as a result?

We also welcome analysis of specific conflicts, technologies, or policy debates that shed light on the broader dynamics of algorithmic warfare.

Conference Language:

English

Submission Guidelines:

- **Abstract:** 300-400 words
- **Bio:** short biographical note (100-150 words)
- **Deadline:** October 15th 2025
- **Format:** submissions via email: algorithmic-warfare.wiso@uni-hamburg.de

Organizers:

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