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Emerging Military Technologies in Theory and Practice: Critical Approaches to Knowledge and Governance

Friday, 20 June 2025 15:00 (1h 30m)

The development and use of autonomous weapons systems and related technologies in warfare present new challenges to thinking about and governing contemporary international affairs. This panel considers, in the first place, the epistemological, theoretical, and ontological underpinnings that inform how emerging technologies are understood in the context of state and non-state armed violence. Secondly, the panel then unpacks the realities of the use (and understanding) of autonomous systems in warfare. As such, the papers that make up this panel provide a rich source for developing critical approaches to understanding emerging technologies of war, going beyond traditional International Affairs theories to consider (1) subversive thinking about power and arms development and control, (2) non-human actors in warfare and their conceptualisation, and (3) (dis)continuities with older concepts of military innovation. In addition, the panel situates these arguments in practice, analysing the use of unmanned systems in Ukraine; AI Decision-Support Systems, the operation of medical triage drones; and how anthropomorphism of 'killer robots' plays out in Ibero-American social networks. Covering a detailed breath of the theory and practice of emerging-tech-mediated violence, this panel evolves the current debates on the understanding of algorithmic warfare in International Relations.

Track Classification: International Studies and Emerging Technologies Working Group