

Concept Note

The Future of War: Autonomy, AI, and Accountability in a New Era of Conflict

Date: Tuesday, November 11

Time: 13:00 CET

Location: Festsaal, Diplomatische Akademie Wien, Vienna

Organized by:

- Austrian Political Science Association (ÖGPW)
- Austrian Institute for European and Security Policy (AIES)
- club.DA
- STK Powerhouse
- Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna

Context & Purpose

The global security landscape is undergoing a profound transformation. Emerging technologies—especially those driven by artificial intelligence and autonomy—are redefining the nature of military operations, strategic alliances, and the legal and moral frameworks that govern warfare. Against this backdrop, Vienna—a city at the intersection of diplomacy, neutrality, and international cooperation—provides a unique venue to critically examine how war is being reshaped.

This conference convenes leading voices in technology, law, academia, and diplomacy to explore the operational, ethical, and political implications of autonomous systems in modern conflict. It aims to foster dialogue on the balance between innovation and accountability, and the role of multilateral institutions in navigating the shifting contours of warfare.

Objectives

- Examine how autonomous systems are altering doctrines of deterrence, responsibility, and military advantage.
- Explore the implications of these technologies for international law and morality, including issues of attribution, compliance, and ethical deployment.
- Assess the role of transnational cooperation and alliances in regulating and adapting to new tools of warfare.
- Strengthen the intellectual and diplomatic community around these challenges through academic insight and practitioner exchange.

Program Overview

13:00 — *Welcome Remarks*

Dr. Robert Schuett, Chairman, Austrian Political Science Association (ÖGPW)

13:10 — *Keynote Address*

Yurii Vitrenko, Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna

Topic: *Warfare, Sovereignty, and the Technopolitical Horizon: Lessons from Ukraine*

13:20 — *Expert Panel Discussion*

Moderator: Roger Hilton – Media Presenter and Research Fellow, GLOBSEC

Panelists:

- **Alex Fink** – US CEO and Co-founder, Swarmer
- **Cezar Regep** – Dual-Use and Robotics Advisor, Intellias
- **Michael Zinkanell** – Director, Austrian Institute for European and Security Policy (AIES)
- **Prof. John Williams** – Professor in International Relations, School of Government and International Affairs, Durham University

Panel Discussion Themes:

- Operational realities and strategic impact of autonomous military systems
- Legal and moral accountability and evolving interpretations of international humanitarian law
- Geopolitical realignment through technological asymmetries
- Ethical dilemmas and the role of multilateral diplomacy in regulating AI-driven warfare

14:30 — *Networking Reception*