

EWIS 2020 Call for Papers

Being Precise; Becoming Collateral: Cultures of Military Precision

Workshop Convenors:

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Precision is an increasingly important concept in contemporary military practice and the discussions surrounding it. Most topically, military drones — as seen, for example, in the recent Hollywood film, *Eye in the Sky* — are seen as the ultimate in precision weapons, able to locate and target individual enemies and kill with, in the ideal, no 'collateral damage'. This understanding of drones builds on a half-century or more of increasingly 'precise' guided missiles, as developments in ballistics, computer control, and satellite guidance have provided for ever-reduced 'circular errors probable'. The contemporary discussion about military precision is, therefore, deeply intertwined with this rise of precision guided missiles and of drone strikes. In this imaginary of military precision it is both a relatively recent phenomenon and one associated with a new Western way of war.

The proposed workshop moves away from the narrow, temporally restricted, culturally-bound and weapons-based framings of precision. Our concern is to understand military precision as constituting a set of ideas, norms and practices that are applied to broader aspects of military culture. We think about military precision as *the socially constructed imaginaries and related institutionalised routines associated with the accuracy or exactness of military technologies and practices*. Consequently, we are interested in the cultures defined by and defining military precision: in weapons targeting, for example, but also in training and drill. Indeed, the modern military is in many ways a product of the development of precise drill, turning a collection of soldiers into functional collective unit through the precision of its drill.

The workshop will explore this notion of precision, and plan for future research and knowledge mobilisation, through a consideration of the following questions:

- How can we understand the production of military precision as a social process rather than a techno-determinist search for ever smaller circular errors probable?
- What are the political consequences of the ways in which military precision is, and is not, understood and practiced in contemporary cultures?
- What are the processes and consequences of constructing the category of human 'collateral'?