

## Call for Papers

### **International Conference of Military History (ITMG) 2026 “Concepts of war and expectations of war: the past and imagined futures of future war(fare)”**

Organised in Berlin from 27 to 29 October 2026

by the Bundeswehr Centre of Military History and Social Sciences (ZMSBw) in cooperation  
with the Federal Academy for Security Policy (BAKS)

After the end of the Cold War, it soon became obvious that the anticipated “peace dividend” had failed to materialise. This was demonstrated by the United Nations’ failure in Somalia, by the international community’s inability to prevent the genocide in Rwanda and by the wars in former Yugoslavia, which together encompassed nearly the entire 1990s. While the violent conflicts of the 1990s bore some of the features of “new wars”, the wars in Chechnya and Georgia, Russia’s annexation of Crimea and the Donbas and attack on Ukraine and – more recently – the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan have demonstrated that interstate wars driven by power politics remain a feature of global politics.

These wars, however, are no longer waged by conventional means alone. “Hybrid warfare” encompasses numerous types of non-kinetic attacks, such as the use and exploitation of policy fields like migration for fomenting and disseminating democracy-threatening narratives with no factual basis, as well as kinetic attacks, such as acts of sabotage directed against civilian infrastructure and the civilian population or state-sanctioned assassinations carried out abroad and targeting individuals deemed troublesome. We are also witnessing a renaissance of the nuclear mindset that, on one hand, stands in the tradition of the Cold War, and, on the other, entails threats to use nuclear weapons as part of a hybrid warfare strategy.

The concept of war, understood as the shape a possible war is anticipated to take in future – is an expression of current expectations of the future. Concepts of war are simultaneously grounded in past experiences. They often are of a military and technological nature and describe assumed, specific realisations of future warfare. Expectations encountered in the political, media and social sphere – as well as within professional communities of experts – regarding which conflicts are at risk of escalating into war may align with or diverge from these concepts about the possible shape of future wars. Expectations of war discussed in the media and academic circles focus on the cause, reason and subject of potential wars. These discussions of future wars focus less on combat activities themselves than on their implications for local, regional and international structures, as well as for states and individuals.

The return of interstate war to Europe provides reason to examine and historicise concepts of war and warfare, as well as expectations of war, and shed light on current patterns of thought. The 2026 ITMG organised by the Bundeswehr Centre of Military History and Social Sciences provides a forum for academics to approach war and warfare of the future from an interdisciplinary and comparative perspective.

We welcome contributions addressing the period from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to the present, with a geographical focus on Europe, Asia and North America, including theatres in the Far North, the deep sea or outer space. Contributions may draw on a range of disciplinary perspectives – from historical sciences to political and social sciences to questions of technology and ethics – as well as on reception studies in film and literature.

We invite conference participants to engage with the following questions from either a historical or contemporary perspective:

How do concepts of war evolve? Who negotiates about them? How are they established and operationalised, and through what processes?

How have concepts of war changed over time? What factors have driven these changes and what have been their consequences?

What trans-, supra- or international learning processes related to strategic thinking can be identified? How does the community of strategic experts develop concepts and objectives related to war aims, warfare and the prevention of war? How are these ideas and objectives received nationally and internationally?

What impact do social notions and social changes have on military concepts of war? Do political or social patterns of behaviour or thought related to crisis and war evoke military response patterns?

How do technological developments influence changes to concepts of war?

Are concepts of war “applied history”? Do they, as it is often argued, provide information not only about the most recent but also about the next war?

## **Organisation**

The conference will be held at the Federal Academy for Security Policy in Berlin from 27 to 29 October 2026.

Please e-mail your proposal for a presentation or for a panel with three presentations in German or English to [ITMG2026@bundeswehr.org](mailto:ITMG2026@bundeswehr.org) by 15 April 2026.

Proposals for individual presentations should not exceed 600 words. Please submit a short CV with your most important academic publications along with your proposal. Please send your proposal and CV in a single pdf document.

A proposal for a panel should include a summary of the panel topic (not to exceed 200 words), the proposals for the individual presentations and the CVs in a single pdf document.

Conference languages are German and English. Simultaneous translation will not be available.

The Bundeswehr Centre of Military History and Social Sciences will cover the costs of travel and accommodation for speakers in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Travel Expenses Act.

Organisers for the Bundeswehr Centre of Military History and Social Sciences:  
Dr Armin Wagner, Dr Ina Kraft and Dr Dennis Werberg

Please send queries and submissions to: [ITMG2026@bundeswehr.org](mailto:ITMG2026@bundeswehr.org)

Timeline:

Proposal submission deadline: 15 April 2026 (by e-mail)

Notification deadline: 21 May 2026 (by e-mail)

Conference dates: 27 to 29 October 2026 (noon to noon)