

Institute for Strategy and Security Policy
Austrian National Defence Academy

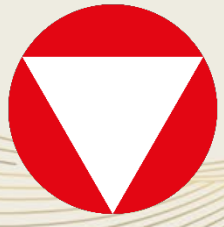


The International Commission of
Military History

The Vienna Spring Symposium 2027

April 19-21, 2027

Vienna, Austria



EINSATZBEREIT FÜR ÖSTERREICH

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“From Stagnation to Adaptation and Innovation”

The International Commission of Military History (ICMH) and the Austrian National Defence Academy (ANDA) invite scholars to participate in a conference in Vienna, 19–21 April 2027, dedicated to the historical study of stagnation, adaptation, and innovation in warfare. The conference intent is to increase academic quality of research and paper presentations, enhance international historian exchanges and best practices, and minimize distractions and expenses by holding the event at a centralized European location.

Call for Papers

There is little doubt that the character of contemporary warfare differs in significant respects from the images of war and conflict that had been developed on the basis of previous military experience, established theories, and evidence-based assessments of future warfare. In particular, the Russo-Ukrainian war and recent military conflicts in the Middle East have highlighted a remarkable dynamic of adaptation and innovation that is reshaping current perceptions of how wars are prepared for and conducted.

This development encompasses a wide range of military capabilities and activities: weapons and command-and-control systems, communications and intelligence, logistics and reconnaissance, as well as tactics, operational art, force employment, and doctrine. Uncrewed and autonomous systems, robotics, artificial intelligence, multidimensional data networking, and the corresponding means of countering these technologies have become central topics of military debate. At the same time, the operational environment has expanded considerably. In addition to the traditional domains of land, sea, and air, space and cyberspace have emerged as increasingly important domains of military activity. Moreover, the human domain itself has become a central field of competition, including through information operations and cognitive forms of warfare.

The speed at which technological, organisational, and conceptual change is taking place today may create the impression of a historical singularity. Yet a closer historical perspective raises an important question: to what extent are the developments currently being observed genuinely new?

Many of the technologies, concepts, and approaches that are now being employed or further developed were already conceived, researched, tested, or discussed during peacetime. Changing strategic and political circumstances, the availability of substantial financial resources, and the opportunity to test and refine capabilities under actual operational conditions may have provided these developments with new momentum rather than creating them from scratch.

Military history offers numerous examples of comparable periods in which technological, tactical, organisational, and conceptual change interacted to transform the character of warfare. Across different historical periods, armed forces have had to respond to

new technologies, changing operational environments, emerging forms of warfare, and altered strategic conditions. Their ability -- or inability -- to adapt could have significant consequences on the battlefield and, in some cases, influence the outcome of entire wars.

These historical experiences also demonstrate that military innovation cannot be understood simply as a linear process of technological progress. Between the development of a new technology or concept and its effective military employment lie complex processes of assessment, experimentation, adaptation, organisational implementation, institutional learning, and practical appropriation. Equally important is the question of why armed forces sometimes retain established technologies, procedures, organisational structures, or doctrines even when alternatives are available.

A military history oriented towards contemporary challenges cannot, *sui generis*, provide direct prescriptions for future warfare or ready-made solutions to current military problems. It can, however, contribute to a better understanding of processes of change and continuity by identifying the conditions, actors, institutions, and decision-making processes that shape military adaptation and innovation. Historical analysis can thereby help to contextualise contemporary developments without assuming that historical experience can simply be transferred to the present.

The conceptual triad **"Stagnation – Adaptation – Innovation"** provides a framework for exploring these processes. It invites not only studies of successful innovations, but also investigations into failed, delayed, rejected, or unintended forms of innovation and adaptation. Equally relevant are the institutional, cultural, technological, economic, political, and organisational factors that contribute to persistence and stagnation.

Theoretical Framing

The conference seeks to bring together **period-specific case studies, comparative studies, and cross-period approaches** in order to explore how military organisations have responded to technological, operational, strategic, and conceptual change. Particular attention will be given to the conditions under which innovation emerged, was adopted, adapted, implemented, resisted, or ultimately failed.
Contributions are particularly welcome in the following areas:

- **Weapons and military technology:** the development, introduction, experimentation, adaptation, and operational employment of new technologies;
- **Tactics and combat:** the emergence, adaptation, diffusion, and implementation of new tactics and methods of combat;
- **Operational art and command:** changes in operational concepts, command structures, force employment, and operational practice;
- **Doctrine and military thought:** the interaction between military theory, battlefield experience, doctrinal development, and institutional practice;
- **Logistics and military support:** innovation and adaptation in supply, mobility, maintenance, sustainment, and resource management;
- **Command, control, and communications:** the development and implementation of new command-and-control systems, communications technologies, and organisational structures;
- **Reconnaissance, intelligence, and information:** changes in the collection, processing, analysis, dissemination, and utilisation of military information;
- **Military learning and lessons learned:** institutional and informal mechanisms for analysing and incorporating operational experience;

- **Operations research and decision support:** the historical development of analytical methods and their influence on military planning and decision-making;
- **Stagnation and institutional persistence:** the causes of resistance to change and the persistence of established technologies, procedures, structures, and doctrines;
- **Failure and non-adaptation:** cases in which available innovations were rejected, delayed, inadequately implemented, or failed to produce the anticipated effects;
- **Comparative and cross-period perspectives:** similarities and differences in military adaptation and innovation across historical periods, conflicts, and military organisations.

Of particular interest are contributions that go beyond describing an innovation and instead examine its **conditions of emergence, principal actors, decision-making processes, institutional context, implementation, diffusion, and actual military effects**. Papers addressing innovations that failed, were abandoned, or produced unintended consequences are equally encouraged.
The conference therefore aims to create a forum in which **historical case studies and broader analytical approaches can be brought into dialogue**. By examining both change and continuity, success and failure, adaptation and stagnation, the conference seeks to explore the historical conditions under which armed forces learn, innovate, adapt—or fail to do so.

Suggested Questions

Contributors may wish to consider, among others, the following questions:

- What conditions encourage or constrain military innovation?
- How do armed forces transform battlefield experience into adaptation and institutional learning?
- Why are some innovations adopted while others are rejected or delayed?
- What role do individual actors, institutions, military culture, and organisational structures play in processes of innovation?
- How do technological innovations interact with tactical, operational, and doctrinal change?
- Under what circumstances does adaptation occur without fundamental innovation?
- When and why does institutional persistence become a source of stagnation?
- How do wartime pressures differ from peacetime processes of military innovation?
- What can historical cases of successful and failed adaptation tell us about the relationship between technological change and changes in the character of warfare?
- To what extent can historical experience contribute to the interpretation of contemporary military developments?

The conference welcomes contributions from military history and related disciplines, including the history of technology, strategic studies, political and social history, organisational studies, and the history of science. Comparative, interdisciplinary, and theoretically informed approaches are particularly encouraged.

Administrative Notes

We would kindly ask all prospective speakers to submit their paper abstracts and short biographies to the Symposium Secretariat, Ms. Krista Rabeder, by email at vienna.spring.symposium@bmlv.gv.at according to the following schedule:

Important deadlines:

Submission of paper abstract (max. 300 words) and short CV (max. 100 words)	15 December 2026
Notification of abstract acceptance (no later than)	15 January 2027
Day of arrival	18/19 April 2027
Beginning of the Conference	19 April 2027, 1300h (provisional)
Conclusion of the conference	21 April 2027, 1400h (provisional)
Day of departure	21/22 April 2027
Deadline for submission of paper for publication	1 August 2027

To assist us with the organizational preparations, we would be grateful if prospective participants could register for the ICMH/ANDA Vienna Spring Symposium 2027 at their earliest convenience by returning the attached registration form to the Symposium Secretariat, Ms. Krista Rabeder, at vienna.spring.symposium@bmlv.gv.at.
As the facilities available to us can accommodate a maximum of 75 participants, we regret that the number of places must be limited. Registrations will therefore be considered in the order in which they are received. We very much appreciate your understanding and would encourage early registration. We would also like to emphasize that ICMH membership is not a prerequisite for participation. We warmly welcome all scholars and colleagues with an interest in military history to join us for this international academic gathering.

The official language of the Symposium will be English. We kindly ask for your understanding that simultaneous interpretation will not be available.

Accommodation:

We are delighted to welcome participants to the **Austrian National Defence Academy (ANDA)** in Vienna (Stiftgasse 2a, 1070 Vienna, Austria), which will host the Vienna Spring Symposium 2027. For the convenience of our guests, we are pleased to recommend the following hotels:

1. **HENRI Hotel Wien**, Lindengasse 12, A-1070 Wien; Österreich;
   Tel. +49 40 300322-546, website: henri-hotels.com/hotels/wien.html

2. **Motel One Wien-Westbahnhof,** Europaplatz 3, A-1150 Wien; Österreich;
   Tel. +43 1 359 35-0, website: motel-one.com/de/hotels/wien/hotel-wien-westbahnhof

Further information regarding the hotels, reservation procedures and payment arrangements can be found in the attached appendices. We hope that these details will assist you in planning a pleasant and comfortable stay in Vienna. As Vienna will be hosting several other conferences and congresses around the time of our Symposium, we would warmly encourage participants to make their hotel reservations as early as possible to ensure suitable accommodation.

We are pleased to inform you that there is no registration fee for the Symposium. The organizers will be delighted to provide all scheduled meals and refreshments during the event. These arrangements include a welcome reception on 19 April 2027, lunch and dinner on 20 April 2027, and lunch on 21 April 2027. Breakfast is normally included in the hotel accommodation arrangements.
We kindly ask for your understanding that lunches are intended for registered Symposium participants. However, accompanying guests are most welcome to join us for the welcome reception on 19 April and the dinner on 20 April 2027.

Transportation
With regard to travel arrangements, we would kindly ask participants to organize their own transportation between Vienna International Airport and their respective hotels, both upon arrival and for their return journey. Unfortunately, due to our limited staffing and financial resources, we are unable to provide a dedicated airport transfer service. We sincerely appreciate your understanding. To make your journey as convenient as possible, we have included a map indicating recommended transport connections to the hotels and the Symposium venue.
We would also kindly ask participants to make their own way to the Austrian National Defence Academy each day. Both recommended hotels are within walking distance of the Academy, allowing for a pleasant walk through Vienna.

Although we are unfortunately unable to offer a separate programme for accompanying guests or organized cultural excursions, we would be very pleased to assist with suggestions for exploring Vienna. The Symposium Secretariat will be happy to recommend sightseeing itineraries, cultural attractions and some of the many historical and cultural highlights that our city has to offer.

Should you require any further information or assistance with administrative or logistical matters, please do not hesitate to contact the Symposium Secretariat at: vienna.spring.symposium@bmlv.gv.at We will be happy to assist you wherever possible and look forward to making your participation and stay in Vienna as enjoyable as possible.

About the Organizing Institutions

The **International Commission of Military History (ICMH)**, founded in 1938, is a non-profit, non-governmental international organization affiliated with the International Committee of Historical Sciences. According to its 2027 Statutes, "the aim of the ICMH is to foster and co-ordinate studies and researches in the field of military history in the broadest sense, in a spirit of international friendship, so that scholars can become better acquainted with each other, co-operate and share the results of their work."

The **Austrian National Defence Academy (ANDA)** (Landesverteidigungsakademie) is the highest military education and research institution of the Austrian Armed Forces (AAF). As a centre of higher military education, academic research and international exchange, the Academy is pleased to provide the setting for this gathering of military historians from different countries and scholarly traditions. The Academy is located within the historic Stiftskaserne military complex at Stiftgasse 2a, 1070 Vienna, Austria. Access to the Symposium venue is via the entrance at Stiftgasse 2a.
As the Academy is situated within an active military establishment, we would kindly ask all participants to bring a valid passport for identification purposes. We appreciate your cooperation with the necessary security arrangements.

We very much look forward to welcoming you to Vienna in April 2027, to engaging in stimulating academic discussions, renewing existing friendships and establishing new connections within the international community of military historians.

It will be our great pleasure to have you with us!