

THE POLITICS OF AI-BASED SECURITY - PREDICTING AND IMAGINING THE FUTURE

Jens Hälterlein

Centre for Security and Society, University Freiburg

Daniel Marciniak

Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle (Saale)

Abstract:

Advancements in the AI-subfield of machine learning are already transforming security practices in various contexts, including military operations, policing, intelligence work, private security, and pandemic management. In many cases, the use of AI-based security technologies aims at predicting the future based on probabilistic calculation. In law enforcement, for instance, AI can be used to pinpoint likely places and times of future crimes, terrorist attacks, and social unrest or to identify individuals at high risk of becoming a future (re)offender, terrorist, or victim (Benbouzid 2019, Brayne 2021, Hälterlein 2021). Moreover, in the course of the Covid-19 pandemic, AI has been increasingly used for epidemiological modelling of how the disease spreads along with different scenarios. These technoscientific predictions render the future knowledgeable in order to act upon it. They are political in the sense that they legitimize certain interventions and delegitimize others. While tech companies highlight the merits of equipping security actors with these seemingly powerful tools and both activists and critical scholars raise awareness for the dangers that their use can bring with regard to data protection and the discrimination of minorities, AI-based security technologies have also become a matter of concern for policy-making. In recent years, many governments and supranational organisations have published strategy papers in which they present their visions of the future development and application of AI. These different visions articulated by various actors at once describe possible technoscientific futures and prescribe technoscientific futures that ought to be attained or to be avoided. They aim to legitimize investments in and/or the stricter regulations of AI-based security technologies.

In conversation with the conference theme, we invite scholarship that seeks to discuss the practice and politics of technoscientific futures. We welcome presentations that address at least one of the following questions:

- How are AI-based security technologies used to predict or forecast likely future events? How do they relate to non-AI-based practices of prediction?
- How do these technoscientific practices of prediction relate to (pre-existing) practices of transforming or governing the future (pre-emption, prevention, pre-mediation, contingency planning, risk insurance etc.)?
- What are the obstacles of doing research in this field and how can we deal with them?
- How are questions of security addressed within the imagination of futures of AI? Presentations may examine imaginaries at all levels: national governments, international organisations, NGOs, communities of practice, scientific communities, corporations, social movements and not least science fiction.
- How do desirable futures relate to criticisms of and resistance to AI-based security technologies (lethal autonomous weapon systems, biometric facial recognition, predictive policing, etc.)? What alternatives are imagined?
- What is the impact of the politics of imagining futures of AI on the politics of predicting futures

with AI?

Key words:

AI-based security technologies, Prediction, Imaginaries