

## Martial Realism and the Problem of War

Wednesday, 5 June 2024 13:15 (1h 30m)

The field of critical military and security studies remains beset by the ontological problem of war (Barkawi & Brighton 2011, Aradau 2012). Recent work has emphasised the inexorable relationship between war and peace, suggesting the ‘always already militarised’ nature of liberal society (Cowen 2012, Howell 2018) and the need to ‘follow the trail of war wherever it leads us’ (Bousquet, Grove, Shah 2020). While it is necessary to reveal and critique the ‘martial politics’ underwriting the liberal conceit of a ‘purely civilian’ non-militarised sphere, there is a risk that war thereby assumes an undue ontological coherence. As Furtado (2023), suggests, ‘ontological militarism’ attributes a ‘heuristic privilege to war, turning it into the cypher of all social relations by investment in an assumed indistinction between war/peace and war/struggle.’ Indeed, in recent years popular political reporting has stressed that the line between war and peace has rapidly and radically blurred with the apparent advent of novel forms of ‘hybrid warfare’. While these claims obscure the historical wax and wane of civil-military relations, they also present ‘martial politics’ not as a lens for critique, but as call to accept an ontological privileging of war. This paper session therefore seeks to consider and critique what might be called ‘martial realism’ and its effects on contemporary international politics.

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Cowen D. ed. (2012) Militarism? A MiniForum.

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Howell, A. (2018). Forget “militarization”: Race, disability and the “martial politics” of the police and of the university. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 20(2), 117-136

**Track Classification:** Post-Structural Politics Working Group