

## Securing the Institution, Securing the State: Militarised Ontological Security and Strategic Narratives

*Friday, 7 June 2024 15:00 (1h 30m)*

In International Relations (IR) research, militaries continue to be viewed as the quintessential vessels of exercising state power. Waves of critical scholarship have, however, moved the focus away from mere material capabilities and realist conceptions of competition between militarised states. Drawing from psychological research on the individual's fundamental need to "know" their place in an uncertain world, the application of ontological security in IR has illuminated how states look not just for physical security, but also ontological security, which often can come at the expense of the former.

This panel argues that the military institution is used not only to secure the state physically, but also ontologically. The presenters in this panel offer varied perspectives on the roles of military institutions in this ontological security generating process, contributing to broadening the understanding of how the ontological security of the state, the military institution, and even individual soldiers, intersect. This intersection can result in the military serving to shore up state ontological security as a respected security actor on the international stage as well as explaining the adoption of hybrid warfare tactics in response to perceived threats to that same security. Most importantly, the panel shows that militaries are more than just parts of a monolithic state, be that in paradoxical reactions to diversity politics or "off record" deviations from institutional alliance narratives. Ultimately, this panel thus uses the lens of ontological security to show the military-state relationship as complex, multidirectional and fundamentally malleable, highlighting the need for academic scrutiny at all levels of the relationship.

**Track Classification:** Critical Military Studies Working Group