

The Collaborative Research Centre “Dynamics of Security” (SFB/TRR 138) and the Anthropology of Peace, Conflict, and Security (APeCS) network of the European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA) are organizing the joint, interdisciplinary conference:

**Peace, conflict, and security in times of existential crises:
Critical, interdisciplinary, and public engagements**

21–22 March 2024, Marburg, Germany

Call for papers

Panel 1. Performance, Culture and the Celebration of Security: Militias Providing Entertainment

Convenors:

Laurens Bakker, University of Amsterdam - l.g.h.bakker@uva.nl

Erella Grassiani, University of Amsterdam - e.grassiani@uva.nl

Stephen R. Millar, Queen’s University Belfast - s.millar@qub.ac.uk

Militias, (armed) civilian groups enacting a security regime, exist throughout the world. Whereas their functioning can complement state forces where these dispose of insufficient means, or increase the quality of local life by replacing dysfunctional or absent state forces altogether, militias may also be instigators of an alternative form of order that is not supported or appreciated by large parts of the population. The line between protectors, gangsters or terrorists might be an indirect one, but a militia could be seen as each by different parts of the population.

Managing public perception thus is important to a militia’s reputation. Whereas the potential for violence -and displays of this capacity- are important, a broader and friendlier image works to sustain a wider acceptance along more peaceful lines. Engaging society in non-violent ways thus might be as essential to a militia’s societal acceptance as its capacity for violence. Its capacity to entertain its supporters is of significance in maintaining societal presence in a non-violent way and -possibly- to expand its reputation and gain new sympathizers through such alternative means. Such entertainment can take multiple forms: musical performances, parades, dances, movies, sports matches and so forth. In this panel we seek to explore the relevance and effects of such alternatives as additives to security-providing activities and the demonstration of the capacity for violence, in increasing societal support.

Our interest in this subject lies with the continued existence of militias throughout securitized situations in which the threat of societal violence has become a permanent fixture, asking questions of the existential quality of the state and society. Where violence remains absent, or the state is strong, such non-violent alternatives are available to militias in legitimizing their presence and influence. The role and effect of such non-violent strategies by violent actors in dealing with existential crises has remained largely unexplored. We aim to engage this subject to come to a more specific understanding societal effects of such entertainment, the strategies of deploying this and the value of entertainment as a vessel for militia's societal influence.

While our focus here is on militias, we invite abstracts that look at different kinds of securitized or militarized groups that work outside or beyond the state, including para militaries and other non-state (violent) actors.

Abstract proposals of up to 300 words, accompanied by titles, names, bios of up to 100 words, and affiliation and contact details of authors should be sent to the convenors by **the 2nd of October 2023**. We expect to notify the selected participants by the 16th of October.

We also remind you that (limited) funding will be available to precarious scholars on a reimbursement of real costs basis. Also, for scholars from the Global South in need of a visa, the organisers can issue letters of invitation.