The Ecological Bootprint:
Apprehending the Military-Environmental Nexus
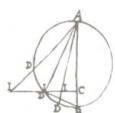### 17–19 March 2026

Conveners: Kerrin Langer and Frank Reichherzer (Bundeswehr Centre of Military History and Social Sciences), Christof Mauch (Rachel Carson Center), Zsuzsanna Ihar (Max Planck Institute for the History of Science), Bernd Sommer (TU Dortmund)

According to recent estimates, more than 5.5 percent of global carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions are linked to military organizations and armed conflict. These outputs—equivalent to roughly twice the annual greenhouse gas emissions of a country such as Germany—are systematically obscured and largely omitted from international monitoring frameworks, including the emissions inventories under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Today, Israel's war on Gaza and the war in Ukraine exemplify the devastating human and environmental costs of conflict. Indeed, 120 million tons of carbon dioxide have been attributed to the first year of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Even in peacetime, the military and the environment remain deeply entangled, with both war preparation and the maintenance of military force requiring vast amounts of energy, the extraction of raw materials, and enclosure of land.

This conference seeks to critically examine the entanglements between the military and the environment. As a point of entry, we invoke the idea of "military metabolism," highlighting the flows of material, materiel, and energy within militarized zones, whilst also foregrounding the affective, epistemic, political, and cultural dimensions of "war matter." We aim to craft ways to more accurately measure the ecological bootprint of the armed forces and to develop frameworks of analysis attentive to the impact of the military on the human and more-than-human. We will consider the complex and enduring connections between militarized landscapes and extractivism, examining the emergence of dual economies, knowledges, and materials tying the two spheres together—in complicity and profit. Finally, we will explore the temporal dimensions of military life and military activity, and the way the multiple temporalities of nature trouble and complicate both historical and contemporary warfare.

We encourage contributions that model environmental pasts, decarbonized—or indeed demilitarized—futures, or invoke strategies, practices, or cultural forms capable of reducing the ecological costs of war. We invite papers *and* creative projects from various fields and disciplines addressing (but not limited to) the following questions:

- What are the material and energy flows ("military metabolisms"), as well as the ideas and emotions, that characterize warfare, and how can we measure its ecological bootprint?
- How can critical military studies—related, for instance, to militarized landscapes and extractivism—broaden our methodological and conceptual approaches?
- How are current military organisations and practices part of hegemonial petrocultures and extractive regimes?
- How is military power related to resource usage and emissions and (how) can this relationship be decoupled?
- How might we realize decarbonization? How might we bring forth demilitarized futures and imaginaries?

Instead of traditional papers, we welcome proposals for alternative formats and projects (e.g. multimodal presentations, lightning talks, visual art contributions, films). Our aim is to bring together scholars from diverse disciplinary backgrounds, such as critical military studies, environmental humanities and environmental sociology, Earth system sciences, and international relations, in addition to artists and activists. We hope to foster the sharing of critical perspectives on, and approaches to, the military-environmental nexus.

Submission Guidelines

To apply, please submit a 400-word abstract and a CV to conferences@rcc.lmu.de by **15 November 2025**. Successful applicants will be notified in mid-December. Travel and accommodation will be covered for active participants.