

Using the biennial Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) maritime exercises as an example, this keywords entry explores the concept of militarism and seeks to understand ideologies of justified violence in relation to the structure of settler colonialism and the logics of white supremacy. Using three brief reflections from RIMPAC 2020, I examine how militarism sustains, and is sustained by, racial hierarchies and colonial power. I also draw links to the Covid-19 global crisis and the Black Lives Matter movement, demonstrating how the impacts of militarism, like a disease, extend far beyond what are usually identified as militaries, infecting all aspects of society.

Keywords: Militarism

EMALANI CASE

On 17 August 2020, Vice Admiral Scott D. Conn, the commander of the US Third Fleet, delivered the welcoming address for RIMPAC 2020, the biennial Rim of the Pacific international maritime exercises hosted by the US Navy and converging in Hawai‘i. While sitting in front of ten flags from Australia, Brunei, Canada, France, Japan, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand, the Republic of the Philippines, Singapore, and the United States, he said: ‘I want to thank the state of Hawai‘i and the local community for their continued support of the navy and allowing us to conduct this training’. After speaking about the extra precautions taken to ‘ensure everyone’s safety’ amidst some of the highest rates of Covid-19 reported in the islands, he then proclaimed that, ‘In spite of Covid-19, the world has not stopped’, suggesting that the navy was to be taken as an exemplar of perseverance and strength in the face of adversity.¹

Just short of two weeks earlier, members of our Cancel RIMPAC Coalition hand-delivered a petition to Hawai‘i’s governor, David Ige. The petition, urging the governor to demand the cancellation of RIMPAC 2020, was signed by more than 12,000 people, bringing into question Conn’s claim that the war games had the support of ‘the local community’.

¹ U.S. 3rd Fleet Public Affairs, ‘Exercise Rim of the Pacific 2020 begins,’ *Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet* (blog), 17 August 2020.

Building on a history of opposition to RIMPAC since its commencement in 1971, our coalition cited ongoing concerns about environmental pollution, destruction, and desecration; the continued militarisation of Hawai‘i’s lands, oceans, and bodies; and, in 2020, the fact that RIMPAC was to take place in the middle of a global pandemic. Rather than lauding the navy’s insistence on moving forward with RIMPAC, we called for it to stop. This was not because we had been defeated by Covid-19, which Conn’s address signalled a cancellation would have implied, but because the pandemic, as Arundhati Roy wrote months prior, could be a ‘portal, a gateway between one world and the next’.² It could be, in other words, the chance to imagine our worlds demilitarised.

A week after Conn’s address, while 22 ships, one submarine, and 5,300 personnel used Hawai‘i’s waters as a military playground,³ I sat with a peace activist in Aotearoa New Zealand who asked, ‘Was it worth it?’ Her question was in reference to the months of petitioning, coalition building, writing, educating, and activism that so many of us had been involved in before the start of RIMPAC. A bit surprised by her question, I said, ‘It’s always worth it’. In the hours that followed our conversation, I found myself increasingly troubled by her inquiry. Not only did it imply that we had lost, or that RIMPAC being allowed to happen meant that we had been defeated, but it also suggested that the effort was over, that our advocacy for a demilitarised Hawai‘i was something to be talked about in the past tense. Upon reflection, I realised that this woman, while having good intentions, had revealed one of the realities of militarism that this keywords article seeks to explore: militarism is the ideology, the behaviour, and the set of structures that protects settler futurities. As Noelani Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua

2 Arundhati Roy, ‘The pandemic is a portal,’ *Financial Times*, 4 April 2020.

3 In 2018, RIMPAC brought together representatives from 26 nations, bringing a combined total of 46 ships, more than 100 aircraft, five submarines, and more than 25,000 personnel. In 2020, due to Covid-19, the exercises were downscaled to at-sea-only events and were shortened from a month to two weeks. Even with these adjustments, however, concerns were still expressed about the destruction and pollution RIMPAC brings to marine environments and about the fact that promises of ‘at-sea-only’ exercises did not guarantee that personnel would not be coming to shore.

explains, futurities are not the same as futures. Instead, futurities ‘are ways that groups imagine and produce knowledge about futures’.⁴ This activist’s question exposed not only her privilege to leave the RIMPAC issue behind, rather than continue to engage with it both before and long after the exercises had taken place, but also her complicity in orienting Indigenous peoples and our futures to settler temporalities.

I begin this article with these three reflections—Conn’s address, our Cancel RIMPAC Coalition’s delivery of the petition, and the question of whether or not activism is ‘worth it’—because they reveal some of the ways militarism works in service of, but is also dependent on, the structures of settler colonialism and the logics of white supremacy. In this keywords entry I therefore explore not only what militarism is, but also how it operates in settler-colonial contexts like Hawai‘i, and how it sustains, and is sustained by, racial hierarchies. As Kjell Skjelsbæk suggested decades ago, ‘just as the word cancer is applied to a number of different but related diseases’, the term militarism can be used as a general reference for a group of phenomena.⁵ Given the realities of 2020, with the pandemic being felt worldwide—infesting and infecting bodies and minds, impacting economies, environments, policies, and relationships—the comparison seems appropriate. Across borders and colonial boundaries, militarism is like the disease we are still working to understand; even when we get closer to identifying its causes, it mutates, continuing to spread and survive on destruction. Our hopes for demilitarised, Indigenous futures, futures that thrive outside of settler dominance, depend upon our willingness to continue to confront this disease in all its manifestations.

4 Noelani Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua, ‘Indigenous Oceanic Futures: Challenging Settler Colonialisms and Militarization,’ in *Indigenous and Decolonizing Studies in Education*, ed. Linda Tuhiwai Smith et al (New York: Routledge, 2019), 86.

5 Kjell Skjelsbæk, ‘Militarism, its Dimensions and Corollaries: An Attempt at Conceptual Clarification,’ *Journal of Peace Research* XVI, no. 3 (1979): 214.

What is militarism?

Writing more than 40 years ago, Skjelsbæk's words have only been reinforced. In fact, the term's referents continue to grow and adapt to and for imperialist agendas. While there is no universal definition for militarism, and while scholars like Skjelsbæk argue that there is no need for one—and even that a universal definition would flatten the diverse ways military institutions exist and function in different places—the term is helpful as it provides a language for examining the logics of martial violence often connected to militaries and how these logics shape societies. Further, it is useful for understanding the complex, interconnected, and co-dependent relationships between militaries, settler colonialism, and white supremacy, connections that scholars like Joshua Inwood and Ann Bonds have argued must be examined.⁶

Though there is no one definition, scholars generally agree that militarism is an ideology.⁷ As Rachel Woodward explains, it as 'an ideology that prioritizes military force as a necessary resolver of conflict' and should be differentiated from 'militarisation', which is the 'multi-faceted set of social, cultural, economic and political processes by which military approaches to social problems and issues gain both elite and popular acceptance'.⁸ Furthering a general emphasis on ideas and values, however, Skjelsbæk argues that militarism should be understood as multi-dimensional, or as

6 Joshua Inwood and Anne Bonds, 'Confronting White Supremacy and a Militaristic Pedagogy in the U.S. Settler Colonial State,' *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 106, no. 3 (2016): 522.

7 Setsu Shigematsu and Keith Camacho, 'Introduction: Militarized Currents, Decolonizing Futures,' in *Militarized Currents: Toward a Decolonized Future in Asia and the Pacific*, eds. Setsu Shigematsu and Keith Camacho (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), xxvi; Rachel Woodward, 'Military Landscapes: Agendas and Approaches for Future Research,' *Progress in Human Geography* 38, no. 1 (2014): 41; Sasha Davis, *The Empires' Edge: Militarization, Resistance, and Transcending Hegemony in the Pacific* (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 2015), 44; Skjelsbæk, 'Militarism,' 216; Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, 'Indigenous Oceanic Futures,' 91;

8 Woodward, 'Military Landscapes,' 41.

having ideological, behavioural, and structural dimensions.⁹ The ideological aspects of militarism, as he explains, involve the attitudes, values, and beliefs that lead to an acceptance (and even an enjoyment) of violence. The behavioural aspects of militarism, on the other hand, include the observable ways militarism, characterised by an excess use of violence, is acted out. Finally, structural militarism operates on both national and international levels, with governments often having ‘a near monopoly on the legitimate use of violence—against each other or against their own citizens’.¹⁰ While looking at the multiple dimensions of militarism is helpful, it is also critical that they be considered in relation to colonial and racial constructions of power. The ideological, behavioural, and structural aspects of militarism must be understood as creating, maintaining, and promoting violence as a means of sustaining colonial power at the expense of those who are deemed less than human, expendable, or able-to-be-sacrificed for empire. Militarism therefore has far-reaching implications, shaping institutions that may seem to have little to do with war, conflict, and military establishments. As Catherine Lutz argues, processes of militarisation are

intimately connected not only to the obvious increase in the size of armies and resurgence of militant nationalisms and militant fundamentalisms but also to the less visible deformation of human potentials into hierarchies of race, class, gender, and sexuality, and to the shaping of national histories in ways that glorify and legitimate military action.¹¹

Militarism, then, must be examined not only as an ideology of violence connected to militaries, but also as an ideology that normalises such violence as ‘legitimate’ or justified in society, impacting everyday attitudes and behaviours.

Conceptualising militarism as being both maintained by, and in service to, settler colonialism and white supremacy opens up space for asking

9 Skjelsbæk, ‘Militarism,’ 218.

10 Skjelsbæk, ‘Militarism,’ 222.

11 Catherine Lutz, ‘Making War at Home in the United States: Militarization and the Current Crisis,’ *American Anthropologist* 104, no. 3 (2002): 723.

questions that move beyond an examination of the military (or what is identified as the military in different places) to an examination of societal impacts. It raises questions like: whose ‘conflicts’ are being addressed by using violence or by a sustained threat of violence? How and why are conflicts constructed, who benefits from their construction, and how does their construction perpetuate racial hierarchies and reinforce racist and colonial policies? And how does militarism in one country impact or infect militarism in another? Sitting at the intersections of militarism, settler colonialism, and white supremacy, RIMPAC provides an opportunity to explore some of these questions. In the following sections, I return to the three short stories and reflections shared above, each one not only illustrating the various dimensions of militarism but also revealing what we must confront if we are to imagine and construct alternative futures.

Militarism and settler colonialism

When Vice Admiral Conn thanked ‘the state of Hawai‘i’ in his welcoming address for RIMPAC 2020, he spoke to and of the settler state, taking it as a given. His words implied that the state is the permission-granting entity with legitimate power over the islands and how they are used (or abused). This kind of acquisition and control of territory is essential to the project of settler colonialism. In settler-colonial contexts, as Adrian Howkins explains, Indigenous peoples were (and continue to be) ‘an unwelcome distraction from the central goal of appropriating [and maintaining control of] space’.¹² Settler colonialism, therefore, is about displacement and emplacement: displacing Indigenous peoples, histories, and relationships to place, and replacing them with settlers who come to stay permanently, this permanent settlement being both about controlling territory and about normalising colonial presence. As Patrick Wolfe argues in his often-quoted

12 Adrian Howkins, ‘Appropriating Space: Antarctic Imperialism and the Mentality of Settler Colonialism,’ in *Making Settler Colonial Space: Perspectives on Race, Place and Identity*, eds. Tracey Banivanua-Mar and Penelope Edmonds (Eastbourne: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 49.

phrase, settler colonialism is ‘a structure not an event’; it is unfinished and it does not fade.¹³ Instead, it is ongoing and is sustained by a number of processes, including militarism.

Recognising the role of militarism in settler-colonial projects in Hawai‘i, Juliet Nebolon writes about ‘settler militarism’, or what she defines as ‘the dynamics through which, in Hawai‘i, settler colonialism and militarization have simultaneously perpetuated, legitimated, and concealed one another’.¹⁴ Analysing health programmes, like drives for blood donations during World War Two, Nebolon argues that militarism, based on the premise of necessary violence used in defence of the nation, created notions of ‘collective injury and sacrifice’.¹⁵ This masked settler colonialism and reframed colonial control over the islands as a security benefit to the people, all supposedly facing a common enemy or threat. In the process, service to the military was promoted, and even required, as a national responsibility and an honourable sacrifice to be made by those who were now considered to be in debt to the colonial power. In this context, donating blood in a time of war was viewed as a path toward becoming a patriot of the colonial country, promising ‘safety’ and ‘security’ while simultaneously putting lives at risk and framing that ‘risk’ as a contribution to the nation.

RIMPAC continues to make similar promises. The war exercises are often promoted as being central to ensuring ‘safety’ and ‘security’, and fostering and sustaining ‘cooperative relationships’ between participating countries.¹⁶ The theme of RIMPAC 2020, as it has been since 2012, was ‘Capable, Adaptive, Partners’. Using Nebolon’s framework of settler militarism, RIMPAC can be understood as an exercise that reinforces

13 Patrick Wolfe, ‘Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,’ *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387–409.

14 Juliet Nebolon, “‘Life Given Straight from the Heart’: Settler Militarism, Biopolitics, and Public Health in Hawai‘i during World War II,’ *American Quarterly* 69, no. 1 (2017): 25.

15 Nebolon, “‘Life Given Straight from the Heart,’” 25.

16 RIMPAC 2020 Public Affairs, ‘RIMPAC 2020 Participants Conduct Sinking Exercise,’ *America’s Navy* (blog), 31 August 2020.

militarism and the justification of violence for ‘safety’, while at the same time masking settler-colonial processes and settler-colonial violence. In rhetoric used to support RIMPAC, Hawai‘i’s Indigenous people are not only ignored but are often completely erased. Conn’s address to ‘the local community’, for instance, utilises the term ‘local’, a convenient reference used in what is often perceived to be a multicultural society where the Indigenous people, the Kānaka Maoli, are relegated to being just another minority. In her critique of the term, Haunani-Kay Trask argues that ‘local’ ‘blurs the history of Hawai‘i’s only indigenous people while staking a settler claim’.¹⁷ Though the term was valuable from the 1970s onward as an identifier for working-class, non-Hawaiian people of colour born and raised in Hawai‘i, it has also worked to erase Indigenous presence while providing an alternative (and more comfortable) label for settlers.¹⁸ When Conn used the term, then, he not only ignored the fact that Kānaka Maoli are a distinct group upon whose stolen lands and waters RIMPAC takes place every other year, but also reinforced the colonially constructed notion that they do not need to be consulted in decisions impacting their place, their people, or their wellbeing. Thus, for Kānaka Maoli, RIMPAC promises safety to those deemed worthy of protection, which, unfortunately, does not include indigenous Hawaiians, who are continually erased by the processes of settler colonialism, a structure that relies upon Indigenous disappearance.

In the months before RIMPAC 2020, this strategic erasure was not only evident in Hawai‘i, but here in Aotearoa New Zealand. In April, an open letter organised by members of the Cancel RIMPAC Coalition Aotearoa was delivered to Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern. The letter urged

17 Haunani-Kay Trask, ‘Settlers of Color and “Immigrant” Hegemony: “Locals” in Hawai‘i,’ in *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawai‘i*, eds. Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Okamura (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2008), 48.

18 Candace Fujikane, ‘Introduction: Asian Settler Colonialism in the U.S. Colony of Hawai‘i,’ in *Asian Settler Colonialism*, 25–26.

the New Zealand government to withdraw its participation in RIMPAC.¹⁹ Signed by peace advocates, academics, activists, students, artists, and concerned community members, the letter resisted settler-colonial logics, centring social, environmental, and ethical concerns, while also challenging the notions of ‘safety’ and ‘security’ often promoted as justifications of violence. When the letter was forwarded to Minister of Defence Ron Mark, however, he responded using the ideologies of militarism, claiming that RIMPAC is essential to ensure that the New Zealand Defence Force is ready to defend ‘New Zealand’s people, places and way of life’, and ready to conduct other operations, including aid relief to our Pacific neighbours.²⁰ His letter sought to appeal to the values of everyday New Zealanders and ‘the freedoms and lifestyle we have today’, while sidelining the violence that those ‘freedoms’ are built upon. In New Zealand, his statements not only ignored the colonisation of Aotearoa, but also hid the fact that RIMPAC enables ongoing settler colonialism here, in Hawai‘i, and in other parts of the world.

The biennial RIMPAC exercises include everything from live-fire trainings, missile- and air-defence exercises, amphibious trainings, counter-piracy and counter-insurgency trainings, anti-submarine exercises, and practices in shooting and sinking decommissioned ships (an exercise called ‘sinkex’) off the coast of Kaua‘i, one of Hawai‘i’s eight major islands. In response to RIMPAC 2020, members of our Cancel RIMPAC Coalition, Tina Grandinetti, Kyle Kajihiro, and Laurel Mei-Singh, highlighted the violence of such trainings, stating: ‘Every two years, RIMPAC has destroyed our island resources while naturalizing the imperial violence that underlines these encounters’. They pointed to some of the impacts of the ongoing, destructive militarisation of our islands, arguing that proponents of RIMPAC fail to acknowledge the larger, societal harms, including:

19 Auckland Peace Action, ‘#CancelRIMPAC. Open letter to Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern: say no to RIMPAC military exercises,’ *Auckland Peace Action* (blog), 8 April 2020.

20 Ron Mark, ‘Response to Auckland Peace Action regarding New Zealand’s participation in RIMPAC 2020,’ letter, 8 May 2020.

the corroding Red Hill fuel tanks at risk of contaminating Oahu's aquifer that brings water to most of our island's taps, the military cost-of-living allowances that inflate the housing market, the destruction of cultural sites, the enclosure of hunting and hiking grounds used by locals, the unexploded ordnances that dot our landscape, and the ongoing history of displacement and occupation in Hawaii.²¹

Another consequence of RIMPAC and other military trainings like it is that they reinforce the military's control over life, or as Nebolon explains, 'who should be killed, who was [and is] disposable, and who was [and is] allowed to live'.²² The fact that Hawai'i's Indigenous people are routinely ignored or erased and that our lands, waters, and resources are viewed as expendable for a greater good, a 'good' we do not get to benefit from ourselves, is evidence of the fact that militarism only serves to protect empire. Working in tandem with settler-colonial processes, militarism ensures that some individuals are not only deemed unworthy of the same freedoms, 'safety', and 'security' extended to others, but that we are not seen as being individuals in the first place. Militarism thus relies upon, and continually sustains, the dehumanisation of Indigenous peoples, a process sustained by the logics of white supremacy.

Militarism and white supremacy

When members of our Cancel RIMPAC Coalition delivered the petition to the governor of Hawai'i, they did so while wearing masks and standing six feet apart. As the number of Covid-19 cases continued to rise in the islands, they followed social-distancing measures, placing the stack of printed pages on the floor next to a lift before backing away to allow a government staff member to pick it up safely and return to their office. The fact that the petition had to be delivered this way sheds light on the realities of living

21 Tina Grandinetti, Kyle Kajihiro and Laurel Mei-Singh, 'Column: This is no time for RIMPAC exercises amid the coronavirus pandemic,' *Star Advertiser*, 29 March 2020.

22 Nebolon, "Life Given Straight from the Heart," 25.

and resisting on occupied and militarised land during a global pandemic. Though opposition to RIMPAC has always been about saving Hawai‘i’s peoples, lands, waters, and futures from military destruction, this year’s pandemic added a sense of urgency to the effort to cancel and end it forever.

In a number of published articles, podcasts, radio interviews, online webinars, and public demonstrations before the start of RIMPAC, members of our coalition spoke about the ongoing, damaging consequences of militarisation while also citing concerns about holding RIMPAC in the middle of a global pandemic.²³ As a member of the coalition, I made the conscious choice, for instance, to frame my opposition in 2020 as a matter of safety, not the ‘safety’ promised by the US Navy, but genuine safety and security for our people.²⁴ Our collective efforts were focused on humanising those of us who are so often forgotten, put at risk, and made to suffer for US imperialism. We appealed to the fact that people around the world were being affected by Covid-19 and that it was absurd to burden them with another threat. Our efforts were also aimed at galvanising support from those in Hawai‘i and internationally who may not have cared about RIMPAC otherwise, or who may not have seen the perverted logics of militarism until it was made glaringly apparent in the context of a global crisis. The disease of militarism was essentially made more visible because of another disease, the coronavirus.

Our efforts to humanise those most impacted by RIMPAC worked in direct opposition to the logics of white supremacy. White supremacy can be understood as being both the material privileges enacted, experienced,

23 Grandinetti, Kajihiro and Mei-Singh, ‘This Is No Time for RIMPAC’; Jon Letman, ‘“Bombs can’t kill viruses”: Hawaii faces backlash as international war games approach,’ *The Guardian*, 13 August 2020; TJ Horgan, ‘Vehicular caravan organized by “Cancel RIMPAC Coalition,”’ *KITV4 Island News*, 16 August 2020; Ann Wright, ‘Despite the danger of COVID 19, the US Military continues war practice in Europe and Pacific and plans for more in 2021,’ *OpEdNews*, 19 May 2020; Catherine Cruz and Jason Ubay, ‘The Conversation: COVID Preparedness Across the State,’ *Hawai‘i Public Radio*, 14 July 2020.

24 Emalani Case, ‘Bombs, bullets, and safety in Hawai‘i: Cancel RIMPAC,’ *Prism*, 20 May 2020; ‘Dear New Zealand, please don’t bring your war games to my Hawaiian home,’ *The Spinoff*, 10 June 2020.

and embodied in a world that favours white skin and, according to Malini Ranganathan, a ‘historiography of how racial hierarchy came to be—how it was instated as an organizing, taken-for-granted logic’.²⁵ Rather than being a singular logic, however, Andrea Smith argues that it is a set of three distinct but interconnected logics: slavability/anti-black racism, genocide, and orientalism. The logic of slavability, as she explains, ‘renders black people as inherently enslavable. The logic of genocide renders Indigenous peoples as disappearing, as always dying (whether literally or in regards to their cultures, languages, and distinct ways of being), and as always being erased. This erasure denies them any claim to territory, thereby enabling settler colonialism. Third, borrowing from the work of Edward Said, Smith explains the logic of orientalism as not just the West’s identification of itself in opposition to an inferior and exotic ‘Orient’, but the strategic marking of peoples and nations as ‘a constant threat to the wellbeing of empire’.²⁶ Smith’s overview and analysis of the three logics of white supremacy is useful for understanding militarism, because the ‘legitimate’ use of violence can only be made legitimate when the target of that violence has already been branded as either enslavable, exterminable, or completely othered, or marked by a combination of two or all three of these dehumanising classifications.

While advocating for the cancellation of RIMPAC, a constant critique raised was that our activism did not account for China. Proponents of RIMPAC would ask things like, ‘What about China? How will we protect ourselves from China?’ Missing in these inquiries was a consideration of orientalism, or the fact that countries like the US rely upon framing the ‘other’ as ‘permanent threats to empire’.²⁷ This aligns with a pre-emptive military strategy, one that the US continues to embrace. This type of strategy focuses on present and future ‘threats’, even if those threats are

25 Malini Ranganathan, ‘Thinking with Flint: Racial Liberalism and the Roots of an American Water Tragedy,’ *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism* 27, no. 3 (2016): 21.

26 Andrea Smith, ‘Indigeneity, Settler Colonialism, White Supremacy,’ *Global Dialogue* 12, no. 2 (2010): 1–2.

27 Smith, ‘Indigeneity, Settler Colonialism, White Supremacy,’ 2.

not fully understood, formed, or identifiable.²⁸ ‘Threats,’ therefore, are constructed, and in the case of RIMPAC, and certainly in the case of US militarism generally, the function of these kinds of threats is to reinforce racial hierarchies and to justify violence. In his work on pre-emption, Brian Massumi explains that threats ‘concentrate “humanity” entirely on one side in order to legitimate acts on “our” side that would be considered crimes against humanity were the enemy given the benefits of being considered human’.²⁹ In the context of RIMPAC, the construction of China as an ongoing, constant threat, or boogeyman,³⁰ rationalises military violence, including the violence that is brought upon those whose lands, waters, and peoples are put in danger to prepare for a threat that has not and may never fully emerge. The logics of white supremacy render some as threats and some as expendable, and all in those categories as inferior.

In the months before RIMPAC 2020, the links between militarism and white supremacy were made more apparent than in previous years by both the pandemic and the ongoing Black Lives Matter marches, protests, actions, and demonstrations that had erupted across the US and around the world in response to the murder of George Floyd, a black man killed by police officers in Minneapolis on 25 May 2020. Amid calls to defund the police emerged a growing awareness of the militarisation of police forces and the legitimisation of violence against those deemed ‘threats’. Here in Aotearoa New Zealand, Pounamu Jade Aikman reflected on the ‘Americanisation of our police’, illustrating (even before the shooting of George Floyd) how the militarisation of US police forces influences police policies and procedures in other countries, including this one, where Māori and Pasifika communities suffer disproportionately as a result of racist policies.³¹ For Māori and Pasifika, it is the rendering of brown people as

28 Brian Massumi, *Ontopower: War, Powers, and the State of Perception* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2015), 9.

29 Massumi, *Ontopower*, 10.

30 Danil Bochkov, ‘China Replacing Russia as the Boogeyman in the U.S. Presidential Campaign,’ *Modern Diplomacy*, 5 August 2020.

31 Pounamu Jade Aikman, ‘We don’t have to go down this path,’ *E-Tangata* (blog), 26 April 2020.

exposable and inferior that results in racist targeting. In the case of Floyd, it was his black skin that made him a threat and that rendered the violence used against him justifiable.

Floyd's murder and the civil unrest that followed further exposed the logics of white supremacy while also calling more attention to the ways the three pillars of racial categorisation and dehumanisation support one another, especially when those suffering under one logic become complicit in the suffering of those under another. As Smith explains, 'what keeps us trapped within our particular pillars of white supremacy is that we are seduced by the prospect of being able to participate in other pillars'.³² This can take the form of non-black people of colour, for example, accepting the racist framings of black people as criminals, as those to be feared, and accepting the perverted notion that lighter skin is somehow better. It can also take the form of black and Indigenous peoples joining the military as a means of moving up in society, without perhaps realising that the military relies upon a sustained orientalism. Participation in other logics of white supremacy can also take the form of non-Indigenous people of colour settling Indigenous lands without an awareness of Indigenous rights, thus contributing to their erasure. These examples demonstrate how participation in one pillar reinforces the others. With RIMPAC, understanding the interrelated logics of white supremacy is useful for identifying how militarism justifies violence used against all those who are not white, even if in uneven ways. To dismantle white supremacy is to recognise the role of each pillar, our potential complicity in particular logics, and our responsibility to push against all three, even those that do not seem to affect us directly.

Militarism and Indigenous futurities

When the peace activist here in Aotearoa New Zealand asked me about whether or not my anti-RIMPAC activism was 'worth it', she unknowingly

32 Smith, 'Indigeneity, Settler Colonialism, White Supremacy,' 2–3.

oriented Indigenous peoples and our futures to settler time, assuming there was no way to exist outside of it. Her readiness to speak about our activism in the past tense, as if RIMPAC's commencement marked the end of our efforts (and therefore, the end of our hope), signalled that her question existed in one temporality, a settler-colonial one taken as *the* temporality rather than one of many. While settler states produce their own temporal formations, ones that uphold the colonial power as that which determines national history, and who and what is arranged and understood in relation to it, there are alternative ways of existing. There are, as Mark Rifkin explains, “different worlds” other than those at play in dominant settler orderings, articulations, and reckonings of time.³³ The peace activist's question, therefore, while seemingly innocent and asked with good intentions, denied me the right to exist outside of settler time, where I can continue to dream alternative futures for Indigenous peoples beyond the structures of white supremacy, the processes of settler colonialism, and the different dimensions of militarism.

In my ongoing efforts to end RIMPAC and to build demilitarised futures, activism is not only always worth it, it is my responsibility. I understand, in other words, that radically hopeful futures can only be enabled by hard work in the present, even if that work comes with what might be perceived as defeat. When RIMPAC 2020 commenced, it was a disappointment. It was heartbreaking. However, aware of my ability to think and dream outside of settler time, I also celebrated the fact that only 10 countries, rather than the anticipated 26, participated. I also celebrated the fact that international awareness of RIMPAC grew, and that solidarity networks across our ocean were renewed, strengthened, and recommitted. Blinded by the ‘defeat’ of RIMPAC, the peace activist didn't see what good had come of our efforts this year and that we cannot, and will not, be discouraged or numbed by the constant onslaught of military violence. We will, instead, continue to persist, to challenge racial hierarchies, to call for justice, to reveal the intersections and co-dependencies of militarism,

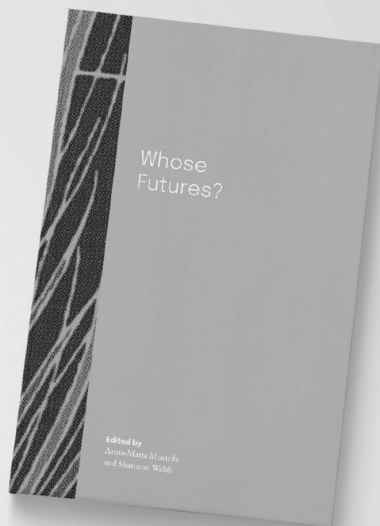
33 Mark Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determination* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2017), 3.

settler colonialism, and white supremacy, so that we can imagine and create alternative futures.

In her work on imagining Indigenous Oceanic futures, Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua explains that unlike settler futurities, which rely upon our extermination and our being in a constant state of disappearance, Indigenous futurities—which are not just future times but the relationships and continuities between what has passed, what is living now, and who and what is to come—do not depend on the erasure of settlers. Indigenous futurities, as she describes, ‘are enactments of radical relationalities that transcend settler geographies and maps, temporalities and calendars, and/or other settler measures of time and space’.³⁴ Though militarism may seem like the disease we cannot always see, the disease we are not always aware of, even when it infects our minds, bodies, and imaginations, our hopes for demilitarised futures rely upon our willingness to keep examining it, even as it mutates and changes. Our hopes for demilitarised futures rely upon our knowing that settler success does not automatically mean Indigenous failure or defeat, and that our dreams can exist outside of the temporalities we have been made to believe we must exist in. Our hopes for demilitarised futures rely upon our sustained dreaming and working, creating the conditions within which military war games are never, and will never again, be justified.

34 Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua, ‘Indigenous Oceanic Futures,’ 86.

ECONOMIC
AND
SOCIAL
RESEARCH
AOTEAROA



Whose Futures?

Many have become accustomed to speaking of what comes next in terms of a singular ‘future’. Such accounts tend to operate within the narrow confines of colonial capitalism and assume continued economic growth. But there is no ‘one’ future; there are many. As the contributions to this book attest, irreconcilable and interrelated futures are already playing out in the present.

This collection brings together voices and perspectives from Aotearoa New Zealand to interrogate whose lives are at stake, whose voices and visions count, and what elements are at play in the unfolding of certain futures over others. Authors highlight the need to be attentive to how various social technologies and institutions invite certain ways of being, thinking and acting and exclude others. In doing so, they offer a series of reflections on futures ‘from below’, in order to amplify voices and fight for alternatives.

Contributors

Hana Burgess
Luke Goode
Kassie Hartendorp
Aitor Jiménez González
John Morgan
Anna-Maria Murtola
Te Kahuratai Painting
Anisha Sankar
Sy Taffel
Arcia Tecun
Samuel Te Kani
Shannon Walsh
Toyah Webb

**Available for purchase
at Unity Books, Strange
Goods and via email
contact@esra.nz**