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## **‘A Technocracy of Sensuousness’: Music Video in International Politics**

<https://www.e-ir.info/2018/04/20/a-technocracy-of-sensuousness-music-video-in-international-politics/>

CATHERINE BAKER, APR 20 2018

Music video reveals how people imagine world politics. This claim is hard to contest given the documented geopolitical influence of other popular cultural artefacts including superhero films and comics, counter-terrorism procedural dramas, military shooter video games, or satirical cartoons. On one level there is a politics of *what* examples of these popular cultural forms these media depict, as well as the geopolitical imaginations or militarised attachments that the pleasures of engaging with them might help to produce. On another level, such media forms have all allowed researchers of world politics and international security to derive new theoretical and interpretive insights from the kinds of artefacts they are and how their viewers, readers or players interact with them.

While music video has been a major popular cultural force since the (global) rise of MTV in the 1980s, they have been subject to little study within the popular culture-world politics (PCWP) continuum even when compared to popular music in general. Perhaps the art form (a combination of a recorded song with dance performances and/or short narrative or non-narrative film, which may or may not directly reflect any of the song's lyrical content) seems bereft of enough meaning to be worth analysing, particularly in contrast to a big-budget Hollywood movie about US soldiers in World War II or a videogame that places virtual weapons into a player's hands. That being stated, we should not ignore music video as a medium for providing narratives of military masculinity, American exceptionalism and the 'Good War' – or other significant narratives in world politics.

Perhaps part of the problem is that music video needs not depend on narrative for making sense. Moreover, its aesthetics have often been seen as a *collapse* of meaning, with its textual content being fairly simple and rendered in the form of lyrics that the images may dramatise. Even when popular culture and world politics research manages to account for images as well as plot and dialogue, many music videos might seem too trivial even for empirical analysis. Often, in commercial music video, all performers seem to do is dance or mime the words as if they were actual singing. And yet from feminist and postcolonial perspectives, the spectacle of bodies moving to music in a transnational economy of desire *cannot but be* political: the fashions and fantasies of music video exemplify societies' gendered and racialised 'cultural archive'.

Historically, conceptually, and methodologically, therefore, studying music video makes new contributions to the wider and wider literature on how popular culture and world politics are intertwined. It shows how the emergence of music video as a promotional and communicative technology was constructed by cultural critics as the manifestation of 'postmodernism' in practice, and how this imagination became a way of making sense of the confusing apparently new dynamics of conflict after the Cold War. It focuses our attention towards performance and stardom, and spectators' affective relationships with the performing body, as often neglected aspects of audio-visual meaning. And, when we go on to consider how music video mediates spectators' affective relationships to performing bodies, it reveals that geopolitical imaginations take their emotional charge from the intimate politics of identification and desire that popular music taps into even more effectively in audio-visual form.

### **Music Video, MTV and the Cultural Politics of the Late Cold War**

The history of music video, for most scholars who deal with it, conventionally divides itself into pre- and post-1981,

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before and after the launch of MTV. Technologies for screening ‘illustrated songs’ had existed since sound began to be synchronisable with film, including the almost-forgotten Panoram visual jukebox of the 1940s. In fact, pop and rock bands in the 1960s and 1970s had increasingly filmed promotional clips to reach international audiences that they could never have performed for in person. MTV represented a platform that affirmed music video as a specific type of cultural artefact, and an early global application of the medium of satellite TV, which possessed the potential to disrupt terrestrial broadcasting’s dependence on the nation-state as its main level of organisation (scholars of media and transnationalism would debate throughout the 1990s and 2000s how far it succeeded in doing so). It also represented, and did not even try to conceal, a mission of consumerist enlightenment and an expression of US soft power. From the start, its branding and visual identity connoted an ‘American’ militarised imagination of technological modernity and the supposedly inevitable spread of US cultural influence, famously announcing itself to viewers with the image of an Apollo 11 astronaut planting an animated MTV flag on the Moon.

During the 1980s, music video worked in tandem with film to communicate the aesthetics of the post-Vietnam ‘remasculinization of America’, broadcasting war and action movies to audiences outside as well as inside the USA. Amanda Howell has written that the heavy presence of electric guitar on the *Top Gun* soundtrack associated its imaginary of jets, flight and US technological dominance of the air with the ‘rock masculinity’ of Tom Cruise’s motorbike-riding pilot: the circuit of associations flowed back to let the legitimacy of US air defence spending benefit from the cool factor of the leather flight jackets and Ray-Bans whose sales were poised to soar. Clearly, the duo of music video and film was responsible for popularising *Top Gun*’s style. *Top Gun* pioneered the use of music video as an additional form of film advertising (using film footage in three smash-hit videos for Kenny Loggins’ ‘Danger Zone’, Berlin’s ‘Take My Breath Away’ and the ‘Top Gun Anthem’ itself), meaning many viewers encountered these invitations to gaze on the eroticised masculine cool of US airpower through music videos before they even saw the film (as the videos were meant to entice them to do).

In many instances, music video was interwoven with cinema to inject this stylised militarism into the popular geopolitics of the late Cold War. However, the cultural imaginaries that music video could document and help to generate were not confined to America: the sexual revolution of the *movida madrileña* in post-Franco Spain, and the last burst of Yugoslav socialist consumerism amid the economic and constitutional crisis after Tito, were mediated through the medium as well. Via similar cultural translations associated with television formats, transnational media history demonstrates how national pop industries filtered the aesthetics of MTV through local cultural meanings of style and consumption to signify aspiration and modernity however those were locally understood.

The aesthetics of Anglo-American music video in the late 20th century readily equipped it to symbolise postmodernism as a practical aesthetic. Its heavy use of montage and jump-cut techniques, its often-dizzying sense of context collapse, its frequent intertextuality and its attitude of pastiche were an everyday manifestation of what theorists such as Frederic Jameson seemed to be talking about. Critics such as E Ann Kaplan bound MTV in particular to the idea of ‘postmodernism’ so successfully that by 1993 postmodernism had become what Andrew Goodwin called the ‘academic orthodoxy’ for scholars of music television. As Goodwin and his fellow editors of the *Sound and Vision* music video reader argued, this was often at the cost of engaging with music video’s place in the wider music industry’s political economy. At the same time, war itself was starting to appear postmodern, by differing from Cold War expectations of ‘modern’ and ‘conventional’ war.

### **Music Video and ‘Postmodern’ Conflict: New Aesthetics for ‘New Wars’?**

Notions such as Mary Kaldor’s ‘new wars’ drew from conflicts at the dawn of the 1990s, when both the first Gulf War and the apparently multiplying number of ‘civil wars’ and ethnopolitical conflicts seemed to epitomise as postmodern warfare. The Gulf War, relayed as spectacular entertainment by the international news network CNN, famously made the arch-postmodernist Jean Baudrillard argue that the war had been constituted by its televisual representation to such an extent that it effectively had not taken place. The ethnopolitical violence and urban warfare of conflicts such as the Yugoslav wars also seemed to fit their own postmodern script: such wars and their causes appeared jumbled

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and surreal both to Western eyes accustomed to perceiving those regions as unknowable, and to citizens of the countries where everyday life seemed to have turned into a baffling new reality almost overnight. Boundaries between civilian space and the front line had been blurred, laws of war were being violated by design and the strategies belligerents used to forcibly change the ethnic map looked very different to the large-scale clashes of regular state armed forces under nuclear shadow that Cold War strategists had anticipated. The surreal mixture of globalised youth culture – symbolised by MTV – and ethnic hatred that confronted war correspondents interacting with many of these wars’ rebels and paramilitaries seemed just one more layer of this conceptual frame for explaining what seemed to be changing about global security and war.

Music video, in tandem with advertising and fashion photography, had meanwhile circulated styles and masculinities transnationally to which participants in post-Cold-War conflicts could turn in defining cultural identities of ‘self’ and ‘other’. In fact, the media on different sides of these conflicts that represented combatants and other participants in conflict, aggregating individual experiences into collective narratives in the process, perhaps used these transnational frameworks of style as a basis for contrasting ‘self’ and ‘other’ more often. The young volunteers who Croatian media turned into patriotic symbols of a nation with a modern, Western cultural identity rising in self-defence supposedly went to the front with Guns ‘n’ Roses songs on their lips and Walkman headphones in their ears as readily as British Tommies in the First World War had (just as mythically) marched towards the front line singing ‘Tipperary’.

The image of Sarajevo’s underequipped defenders as a highly-motivated, ragtag band of peace-loving rockers forced into war was not untruthful – rock music was already a symbol of the city’s cultural identity, and the Sarajevo rock scene in the 1980s had given rise to nostalgically remembered last-ditch attempts to reinvent multi-ethnic Yugoslavia – but quickly became myth, first through the work of local and foreign war photographers, then via Danis Tanović and Zvonka Makuc, the director and costume designer of *Ničija zemlja* (*No Man’s Land*) [2001], who dressed Branko Ćurić’s reluctant Bosniak soldier in a mismatched uniform and tattered t-shirt bearing the logo of the Rolling Stones.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t-bxeBqLF6s>

Today’s configurations of what James Der Derian has called the ‘Military–Industrial–Media–Entertainment Network’, meanwhile, do not even require music video to be transmitted through broadcast television. Online video platforms, with YouTube chief among them, have decoupled music video from TV and catapulted it into the realm of digital media. Just as popular culture and world politics research has inseparably become research into digital communications and new media, music video scholarship has also taken a new digital turn.

### **Music Video and Digital Media Today**

The frequency with which journalists compare the editing, pace and soundtrack of ISIS recruitment videos to MTV as well as Hollywood starts to reveal that, without realising how music video’s aesthetic practices engage the viewer (via an affective, embodied politics of spectatorship that feminist film scholars already understand), it is hard to grasp how these audiovisual artefacts which so perplex security services create the bonds of identification that persuade sympathisers towards militancy. This goes equally for Islamist networks and the far-right and white supremacist groups that synchronise videos of their mobilisation and training with tracks from the libraries of epic ‘trailer music’ that give video game and film trailers their characteristic soundscapes.

Yet digital media’s effect on how music video operates in world politics reaches further than networks of extremism and militancy. YouTube has supplanted MP3 blogs as the chief site of music micro-archiving – an important practice of digital memory and postmemory for many diasporas, including post-Yugoslav ones – offering users new audiovisual possibilities for creative remembering by synchronising audio with their own montages of still or moving images depicting their community or nation. Digital video cameras and editing software render it much simpler and cheaper to make, let alone disseminate videos, democratising music video production: hip-hop musicians, above all, have been able to use digital platforms to record and spread their simultaneously globalised and intensely localised affirmations of identity and expression and social critique.

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Music video's increasing convergence with other forms of audiovisual media (including YouTube and digitally generated cinema) is even being said to have produced a distinctively new audiovisual and digital aesthetics. The music video scholar Carol Vernallis calls it the 'audiovisual swirl', while Steven Shaviro has theorised as 'post-cinematic affect', a new structure of feeling emerging from how digital as opposed to analogue technologies depict and stimulate experience. The digital music video, Shaviro argues, blurs the traditional boundary between filmed action and post-production, ontologically altering what it means to construct and (re)produce audiovisual meaning (even if audiovisual meaning in analogue music video was already more obviously artificial and less mimetic than in other media). This will have its own implications for spectatorship and its embodied experiences, which – games researchers such as Matthew Thomas Payne have led the way in showing – are part of the political.

Throughout these decades of change in technology platforms, the economies of media and international politics, music video exhibits all aspects of what researchers argue makes popular culture political. It plays a role in popular geopolitics, offering frequently fantasised depictions of space and place, though (Vernallis notes in *Experiencing Music Video*) differently to many spatial settings in film and television: while narrative audiovisual fictions usually aim to represent an identifiable existing or imaginary geographical location, even if it has to be filmed elsewhere, music video very often conjures a *type* of place, as cultural imaginary or 'place-myth'. A video set on a beach has (normally) been filmed on one particular beach with its own spatial location and history, but represents its action taking place at *the* beach, a spatial trope on to which viewers project their cultural imagination. The beach, the luxury hotel and the club are all characteristic settings in music video; at certain moments and in certain genres, so to have been the military base or the spaceship. To break the norm, spaces have to be directly marked as extant material locations, such as sites well-known to 'tourist gazes' or places extra-textually known to be the performer's home town. Music video is therefore one more form of media through which viewers produce popular geopolitics and the politics of desire that, as Cynthia Enloe and Debbie Lisle both argue, create the fascinations around militarised and fantasised tourist sites that they do. But all popular cultural forms can do this – is any world-political work *particularly* characteristic of music video?

## **Embodied performance, Stardom and Celebrity in World Politics**

One element of meaning particularly prominent in, though not exclusive to, meaning-making in music video is stardom and celebrity. International Relations scholarship seems more able to talk about celebrities as political operators off screen (especially as humanitarians), than either the labour they do as performance or the influence that narrative understandings of stars and their personas have on how viewers make sense of the characters and performances that stars embody. Music video need not of course feature the music's performers at all, especially for musicians and genres claiming an alternative 'cool' which generates subcultural capital from rejecting commercial 'celebrity': MIA's controversial video 'Born Free', directed in 2010 by Romain Gavras, was a short film depicting the rounding-up and execution of white ginger-haired men by US paramilitary police where the singer did not appear on screen at all, though it conformed to other music video genre conventions by cueing the editing of its action to the song. When performers appear, as in commercial pop, R&B and hip-hop they are most likely to do, videos produce their imaginative space by combining costume and place, mediating setting through the embodied performances of actors and dancers but even more so through those of their star(s).

Andrew Goodwin, whose early 1990s writing on music video may have outlasted some other studies from the MTV era more concerned with the aesthetics of the postmodern, drew on Richard Dyer's work on film stardom to argue in his 1992 book *Dancing in the Distraction Factory* that one of the most important ways viewers interpret music video is through the 'metanarratives' of stardom and identity that stars' images and bodies bring. Star personas are built up over time as the sum of their most iconic performances plus the most recirculated representations of their image off screen: many musicians' persona-making images will be the styles of their most famous music videos, in tandem with or separate from the look of their most famous albums, tours, or publicity campaigns. Music video has contributed more and more to the on-screen dimension of star image as the physical album's importance in music sales has declined. Goodwin argues that 'the storyteller, rather than the story' is what constitutes the 'central fiction' of popular music, a form of entertainment that leverages the authenticity of feeling listeners are supposed to perceive in vocal expression. Viewers thus make sense of music video both by using their knowledge of a star's persona to make narrative connections between videos' interleaved sequences of many videos, and also by wondering what

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contribution the image of this video is meant to make in the ongoing story of the star.

Using popular culture in a 'narrative' or an 'aesthetic' approach to security studies – especially if that narrative or aesthetic approach already, like Annick Wibben's or Laura Shepherd's, constitutes itself as feminist – means therefore that part of the narratives and aesthetics in front of us *is* this metanarrative of star persona, in any popular cultural form where an economy of stardom is at work. Neither meaning, nor the affective pleasures of spectatorship, come solely from *what* is happening and being said on screen, or *how* it looks and sounds; they also come from *who* is performing it and *who* is watching. They ask us therefore to take account of the politics and emotions of identification and desire (indeed of the desires that identification invites) that feminist and queer gaze theorists already seek to explain. Combining music, audiovisual fiction, performance and fashion photography, not to mention less or more concealed forms of advertising, spectatorship in music video involves the affective relationships sustained by all these cultural forms.

Making stardom and the politics of spectatorship more central to how we think about music video (and other popular culture) thus helps ask deeper questions about common 'popular culture and world politics' themes seen in music video, such as its mediation of war memory and its often contradictory position in and/or against dynamics of militarisation.

## **Music Video and Militarisation**

Music videos may depict war as adventure or duty, war as trauma, or even create an imaginary space that invite the viewer to feel powerful affects towards war but in contradictory directions, what Cynthia Weber might term perversely 'and/or'. Cinematic conventions of war narrative reverberate through music video, from the small-town-to-boot-camp-to-Iraq narrative of Green Day's 'Wake Me Up When September Ends' (and most US Iraq War cinema), to the cinematic-literary interplay of Metallica's 'One', released in 1989, which remediated the pacifist tragedy of the 1971 film adaptation of *Johnny Got His Gun* but as a song in live performance introduces itself to the audience with recorded machine-gun fire, explosions and other 'belliphonic' sounds of war (and according to Jonathan Pieslak was a favourite of US troops in Iraq reading themselves for danger during vehicle patrols). The ambiguity of how distanced or immersed the listener is 'supposed' to be from imaginaries, ideologies and masculinities of war is arguably metal's stock-in-trade, from the heavy metal era to millennial folk and power metal or the relativistic military-history-making of Sabaton, affectively manifesting the and/or.

Amid the 'increasingly explicit visualisation' of warfare that Lilie Chouliaraki and others detect, and the 'qualitatively new' expression of older 'feedback loop[s]' between military and civilian technology that Der Derian argues digital media provides, music video and its strategies for representing spaces and bodies are not quite like any other cultural artefact within what Rachel Woodward and Karl Jenkins call 'popular geopolitical imaginaries of war'. There are the videos we would expect to be embedded in these imaginaries because their songs' themes are already nationalistic or patriotic, like the just warrior/beautiful soul storyline that accompanied Jura Stublić's video 'Bili cvitak' ('White flower') during the Croatian war of independence (the soldier's bereaved girlfriend ends up joining a fictional, victorious Croatian peace monitoring force), and those we might not: nothing in the assemblage of music and lyrics that formed Cher's song 'If I Could Turn Back Time' in 1989 would have determined that its video needed to be filmed as a staged concert to hundreds of cheering US sailors on board the *USS Missouri*, or that Cher needed to pose straddling one of the ship's guns, yet there in her fishnets she unquestionably is.

Video also permits musicians to mediate gendered histories of nationhood and war by taking the roles of soldiers or other archetypal participants in significant national wars from the past, again whether or not the song itself has a patriotic theme. The Armenian singer Sirusho inserts herself into a continuum of ancient, late-19th-century and post-Soviet heroism by leading a band of armed men in (neo-)traditional feasts and dances in the mountains in her 2015 video 'Zartonk' ('Awakening'); while the Czech model-turned singer Mikolas Josef plays a fallen Czech soldier (from WWI, being buried under the Czechoslovakian flag and/or today's identical Czech one) and a contemporary young

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man in a 2016 song 'Free' that imagines a dream of world tolerance (including Putin waving 'the flag of the gay' to reconcile with a Pride parade) but has nothing ostensibly to do with Czech nationhood or Czechoslovak liberation during the First World War. Their ideologies of gender, war and nation could and do appear in any popular cultural form: yet how they depict them, via the singing, costumed body of a performer who invites the viewer to make sense of this persona as an image within the star's metanarrative, is distinct to music video.

At more apparent distance from actual conflict, but not from militarisation in Enloe's broader societal sense, are videos that become vehicles for the affirmation of camouflage and uniform as fashion (where Enloe encourages us to start unpicking what has made people think that camouflage prints and military references are attractive things to wear). The fashion industry and the construction of popular music stardom are interdependent, as much in the remediation of historic and contemporary military uniform into fashion as in anything else (take Jimi Hendrix, Sgt. Pepper, The Clash and above all Michael Jackson; the vehicle for women's tops with padded shoulders and militaristic epaulettes to transfer from the Balmain catwalk into high-street fashion in 2009–10 was above all the star image of Rihanna). To queerly 'trouble the soldier as an object of desire', as Jesse Crane-Seeber does in rethinking the relationship between actual soldiers' bodies and the state, involves understanding the militarisation of desire, identification and self-fashioning outside as well as inside the military – and music video, as what Goodwin called a 'technocracy of sensuousness', helps form this framework, albeit in complex configurations of irony and resistance. If Jane Tynan suggests that fashion photography referencing military uniform and activity invites its viewers to identify with imaginaries of war by recreating 'images of social and sexual power' through the 'seductive qualities' of elements of military uniform, the more multisensory involvement of audiovisual spectatorship makes the invitation to identify more intense.

The glamorous female combatant indeed became a stock character for music video treatments in the 2000s and 2010s, just as ideas about women's capacity for violence were being contested across political and cultural spheres. Katy Perry's 'Part Of Me', Rihanna's 'Hard' and Beyoncé's 'Run The World' each position themselves differently towards the embodiment of US militarism (Perry's character is a jilted lover who finds empowerment in joining the Marines, in a video made with Marine Corps cooperation; Rihanna's self-proclaimed 'couture military' video is set in a hyperreal, desert battlefield and advanced the narrative reconstruction of Rihanna's persona around fantasies of female excess, revenge and violence after she had survived intimate abuse; Beyoncé's places in her in a post-apocalyptic setting, commanding a defiant, high-fashion, black-led women's rebellion against heavily armoured male police) yet produce stills and animated gifs which, abstracted from the narrative, move even more flexibly along the and/or. Their configurations of race, gender, nation and mimesis/fantasy belong just as much as the television dramas Laura Shepherd discusses in *Gender, Violence and Popular Culture* within an aesthetic approach to gender and security.

As well as being representations with transnational origins, they also have a transnational and potentially global reach. The singer Helly Luv, part of the Kurdish diaspora in Finland, filmed two videos in 2014–15 in Kurdistan using a similar bank of sonic and visual imagery to the aesthetics of 'Run The World' or MIA's 'Bad Girls' but incorporating real peshmerga fighters and equipment and dramatizing a fight against terrorism and repressive fundamentalism, celebrating peshmerga women at a time when their image was already the subject of problematic fascination in the West. Western journalists covering the Liberian civil war, Katrin Lock writes, often compared the style of the Liberian female militia leader Black Diamond to stars of hip-hop, soul and Blaxploitation cinema, and indeed the girls in the militia 'adopted the symbols of this global and universal visual language, which is so familiar from music videos and Hollywood films', in fashioning themselves for war.

As popular geopolitics, as war memory, as vehicle for the political economy of fashion or desire itself, music video is already world-political. At the same time, as digital communications have become part of statecraft, state and non-state actors (from ISIS to the manufacturers of fighter jets) have become increasingly skilled at using techniques that mark audiovisual artefacts as music video to enhance the appeal and impact of their own political and strategic messages. Adi Kuntsman and Rebecca Stein describe the Israeli military's production of content tailored to the visual aesthetics of digital media platforms, intended to be shared organically and virally through social networking, as

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‘digital militarism’. The Chinese military recruitment video released with a nu-metal style soundtrack in 2016 uses music video conventions such as the slow-motion introduction of a hero dressing themselves in uniform, and the synchronisation of a missile hitting its target with a musical break, which even to a non-Chinese-speaker show the video aiming to attach its intended audience’s identificatory pleasures of spectatorship on to the Chinese military.

Music video, therefore, is not just useful for understanding popular culture and world politics because it increases the number of interesting popular cultural texts to analyse, because it offers historical insights into how people were imagining the apparently changing nature of conflict and security at the turn of the 1980s/1990s, or because ‘MTV-style’ is still a buzzword for the translation of aesthetics from entertainment media into propaganda and diplomacy even though MTV’s major contributions to audiovisual culture since the millennium have been reality TV: it also shows how deeply connected aesthetics, visuality and emotion in international politics are. Popular music is and has long been a nexus of visuality, identification and intimate affect, as well as a cultural form so intimately connected to the politics of sexuality and race that a ‘queer intellectual curiosity’ ought to recognise it as even more important to IR than it has already been said to be.

## **Music Video and Studying World Politics**

The relatively small international politics literature on music, as Matt Davies and Marianna Franklin noted in 2015, has been slow to take up any objects of study beyond song lyrics with overtly political messages or state treatment of politicised musical movements, let alone the ‘embodied affects and experiences of sonic, audible worlds’ that distinguish music from other cultural forms. Even Davies and Franklin, however, do not theorise the nexus between sound and audiovisual aesthetics of music *video*. And yet it is clearly embedded in the pop-cultural ‘archive’ where gendered understandings of war, violence and security are produced and contested; in the networks of capital, ideology, technology, representation and power in which the defence and entertainment industries are mutually implicated; in the ‘everyday geopolitics’ of militarism and anti-militarism that Critical Military Studies research brings to light. Music video, arguably more than any other popular cultural form, puts the political economy and aesthetics of fashion, style and desire, and the narrative dimensions of celebrity and stardom, into the fore. Recognising what is *political* about them requires more than transferring typical questions about film and television to music video: it also proceeds from largely feminist and queer inquiry into the relationship between spectator, audiovisual image and performer that could usefully be brought into studying more conventionally ‘narrative’ audiovisual forms as well. Music video is a technology of fascination, fantasy and desire which, if we are seeking to explain the ‘fascination with militarized products’ that so troubles Enloe, condenses the militarising potential of audiovisual narrative texts on to an aesthetic and stylistic fulcrum; it animates the seductions of empire that so alarm Anna Agathangelou and L H M Ling.

Music video thus not just encourages but forces us to follow Roland Bleiker’s encouragement for scholars of music in world politics to go beyond the places ‘where references to the political are easy to find’, that is beyond the layer of text and language which conventional ways of knowing about global politics find most accessible. Bleiker resolved this for himself by studying instrumental music, asking explicitly ‘What can we hear that we cannot see? And what is the political content of this difference?’ Music video is conversely about what we can hear and what we can see at the same time, and the political content of these senses’ convergence rather than their separation: it is the *synchronisation* of editing with sound, Matthew Sumera suggests while discussing soldiers’ own amateur digital montages of war footage set to metal soundtracks, that creates music video’s unique aesthetics and affects. While music’s ‘embodied affects and [...] sonic, audible worlds’ certainly offer more scope for incorporating music into IR’s ‘aesthetic turn’ than if musical lyrics simply counted as another written text, it is not even just the sonic and audible dimensions of musical worlds which matter: music video’s symbiosis of moving image *and* sound, and its intimate political economy of stardom, identification and desire, create modes of imagining international politics which are not quite matched by any other cultural form.

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## **About the author:**

**Catherine Baker** is Senior Lecturer in 20th Century History at the University of Hull. Her books include *Sounds of the Borderland: Popular Music, War and Nationalism in Croatia since 1991* (Ashgate, 2010) and *Race and the Yugoslav Region: Postsocialist, Post-Conflict, Postcolonial?* (Manchester University Press, 2018). Her research explores the politics of identification with nationalism and militarism, especially through popular culture, and she is developing new projects on music video in international politics and on 'female military masculinities'.

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