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Militarism in Popular Culture: Comparative perspectives

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Representations and discourses of militarism in popular culture play an important role in shaping the political possibilities for armed violence and war, but also for sustainable peace and reconciliation. In a time of increasing political tension, the return of large-scale wars to Europe and the Middle East, and the threat of conflict looming in different parts of the world, paying attention to the complex and multiple ways in which popular culture is implicated in militarism is more crucial than ever. Popular culture, of course, is not homogenous and plays not just multiple roles, but often competing and contradictory ones as well. It can help embed ideas of militarised fetishism and masculinity through social media, video games, and the action blockbuster while simultaneously it can also disrupt and challenge the discourses of violence by bringing the horrors of war to an otherwise disconnected audience in documentary cinema, poetry, or art. Given the unique intersection of a history of internecine violence, vibrant culture, and an ongoing peace process to be found in BISA's 2025 host city of Belfast, Northern Ireland we feel this is a particularly apt time and place to hold these conversations.

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