The Militarization of US Higher Education after 9/11

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Abstract
Subject to severe financial constraints while operating within a regime of moral panics driven by the 'war on terrorism', higher education in the United States faces both a legitimation crisis and a political crisis. With its increasing reliance on Pentagon and corporate interests, the academy has largely opened its doors to serving private and governmental interests and in doing so has compromised its role as a democratic public sphere. This article situates the development of the university as a militarized knowledge factory within the broader context of what I call *the biopolitics of militarization* and its increasing influence and power within American society after the tragic events of September 11, 2001. Highlighting and critically engaging the specific ways in which the forces of militarization are shaping various aspects of university life, this article focuses on the growth of militarized knowledge and research, the increasing development of academic programs and schools that serve military personnel, and the ongoing production of military values and subject positions on US campuses. It also charts how the alliance between the university and the national security state has undermined the university as a site of criticism, dissent and critical dialogue.

Key words
■ 9/11 ■ America ■ higher education ■ militarism ■ military ■ neoliberalism ■ pedagogy

War is the motor behind institutions and order. In the smallest of its cogs, peace is waging a secret war. To put it another way, we have to interpret the war that is going on beneath peace; peace is coded war. We are therefore at war with one another; a battlefront runs through the whole of society, continuously and permanently, and it is this battlefront that puts us all on one side or the other. There is no such thing as a neutral subject. We are all inevitably someone's adversary. (Foucault, 2003: 50–1)

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The Militarized Knowledge Factory: Research, Credentials and the CIA

> While the Cold War and Sovietology are gone from the scene, a parallel project is now underway: the launching of large-scale initiatives to create a cadre and set of institutions that penetrate our campuses and link them to national security, military, and intelligence agencies. The aim is nothing less, as Congressional hearings show, than to turn back opposition on our campuses to imperial war, and turn campuses into institutions that will, over the next generation, produce scholars and scholarship dedicated to the so-called war on terror. These programs are part of a broader effort to normalize a constant state of fear, based on the emotion of terror, while criminalizing anti-war and anti-imperial consciousness and action. As in the past, universities, colleges and schools have been targeted precisely because they are charged with both socializing youth and producing knowledge of peoples and cultures beyond the borders of Anglo-America. (Martin, 2005)

Now that the war on terrorism and a gradual erosion of civil liberties have become commonplace, the idea of the university as a site of critical thinking, public service and socially responsible research appears to have been usurped by a manic jingoism and a market-driven fundamentalism that enshrine the entrepreneurial spirit and military aggression as the best means to produce the rewards of commercial success and power. Not only is the militarization of higher education made obvious by the presence of over 150 military-educational institutions in the United States designed to 'train a youthful corps of tomorrow's military officers' in the strategies, values, skills and knowledge of the warfare state, but also, as the American Association of Universities points out, in the existence of hundreds of colleges and universities that conduct Pentagon-funded research, provide classes to military personnel, and design programs specifically for future employment with various departments and agencies associated with the warfare state (Turse, 2004; see also Johnson, 2004: 97–130). The intrusion of the military into higher education is also on full display with the recent announcement by Robert Gates, the Secretary of Defense under George W. Bush, of the creation of what he calls a new 'Minerva consortium', ironically named affter the goddess of wisdom, whose purpose is to fund various universities to 'carry out social-sciences research relevant to national security' (Brainard,

2008). Without apology, Gates would like to turn universities into militarized knowledge factories producing knowledge, research, and personnel in the interest of the Homeland (In)Security State. Faculty now flock to the Department of Defense, the Pentagon and various intelligence agencies either to procure government jobs or to apply for grants to support individual research in the service of the national security state. At the same time, as corporate money for research opportunities dwindles, the Pentagon fills the void with millions of dollars in available grants, stipends, scholarships and other valuable financial rewards, for which college and university administrators actively and openly compete. Indeed, the Department of Homeland Security is flush with money:

> [It] handles a $70 million dollar scholarship and research budget, and its initiatives, in alliance with those of the military and intelligence agencies, point towards a whole new network of campus-related programs. [For instance,] the University of Southern California has created the first 'Homeland Security Center of Excellence' with a $12 million grant that brought in multidisciplinary experts from UC Berkeley, NYU, and University of Wisconsin-Madison. Texas A&M and the University of Minnesota won $33 million to build two new Centers of Excellence in agrosecurity. . . . The scale of networked private and public cooperation is indicated by the new National Academic Consortium for Homeland Security led by Ohio State University, which links more than 200 universities and colleges. (Martin, 2005)

Rather than being the object of massive individual and collective resistance, the militarization of higher education appears to be endorsed by liberals and conservatives alike. The National Research Council of the National Academies published a report called *Frameworks for Higher Education in Homeland Security* (2006), which argued that the commitment to learning about homeland security is an essential part of the preparation for work and life in the 21st century, thus offering academics a thinly veiled legitimation for building into undergraduate and graduate curricula intellectual frameworks that mirror the interests and values of the warfare state. Similarly, the Association of American Universities argued in a report titled *National Defense Education and Innovation Initiative* (2005) that winning the war on terrorism and expanding global markets were mutually informing goals, the success of which falls squarely on the performance of universities. This group argues, with a rather cheerful certainty, that every student should be trained to become a soldier in the war on terror and in the battle over global markets, and that the universities should do everything they can 'to fill security-related positions in the defense industry, the military, the national laboratories, the Department of Defense and Homeland Security, the intelligence agencies, and other federal agencies' (Martin, 2005).

More and more universities are cooperating with intelligence agencies with few objections from faculty, students and other concerned citizens (Price, 2005). In the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks,

many academics are enthusiastically offering their services for the plethora of expert personnel positions, which according to National Intelligence Director John Negroponte in 2006 were available among the 16 federal intelligence agencies and programs that employ over 100,000 personnel (*USA Today*, 2006). The *Wall Street Journal* claims that the CIA has become a 'growing force on campus' (Golden, 2002), while a November 2002 issue of the liberal magazine *American Prospect* published an article by Chris Mooney calling for academics and the government intelligence agencies to work together. As he put it, 'Academic–intelligence relationships will never be problem free. But at present, the benefits greatly outweigh the costs' (Mooney, 2002). Such collaboration seems to be in full swing at a number of universities. For example, major universities have appointed former CIA officials as either faculty, consultants or presidents. Michael Crow, a former agent, is now president of Arizona State University and Robert Gates, the former Director of the CIA, was until recently president of Texas A&M. The collusion among the Pentagon, war industries and academia in the fields of research and development is evident as companies that make huge profits on militarization and war, such as General Electric, Northrop Grumman and Halliburton, establish crucial ties with universities through their grants, while promoting their image as philanthropic institutions to the larger society (see Roelofs, 2006). As the university is increasingly militarized, it 'becomes a factory that is engaged in the militarization of knowledge, namely, in the militarization of the facts, information and abilities obtained through the experience of education' (Armitage, 2005: 221). The priority given to such knowledge is largely the result of the huge amount of research money increasingly shaping the curricula, programs and departments in various universities around the country. Money flows from the military war machine in the post-9/11 world, and the grants and research funds that the best universities receive are not cheap. In 2003, for example, Penn State received $149 million in research and development awards while the Universities of California, Carnegie Mellon and Texas received $29.8 million, $59.8 million and $86.6 million respectively, and they are not even the top beneficiaries of such funds (see Turse, 2004). The scale, sweep, range and complexity of the interpenetration between academia and military-funded projects is as extensive as it is frightening. Nicholas Turse explains:

> According to a 2002 report by the Association of American Universities (AAU), almost 350 colleges and universities conduct Pentagon-funded research; universities receive more than 60% of defense basic research funding; and the DoD is the third largest federal funder of university research (after the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation). . . . the Department of Defense accounts for 60% of federal funding for university-based electrical engineering research, 55% for the computer sciences, 41% for metallurgy/materials engineering, and 33% for oceanography. With the DoD's budget for research and development skyrocketing, so to speak, to $66 billion for 2004 – an increase of $7.6 billion over 2003 – it

> doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that the Pentagon can often dictate the sorts of research that get undertaken and the sorts that don't. (Turse, 2004)

Along with the money that comes with such defense-oriented funding is a particular assumption about the importance of ideas, knowledge and information and their relevance to military technologies, objectives and purposes. Of course, this is about more than how knowledge is obtained, shaped and used by different elements of the military-industrial complex; it is also about the kind of pressure that the Department of Defense and the war industries can bring to bear on colleges and universities to orient themselves towards a society in which non-militarized knowledge and values play a minor role, thus removing from higher education its fundamental purpose in educating students to be ethical citizens, learn how to take risks, connect knowledge to power in the interests of social responsibility and justice, and defend vital democratic ideals, values and institutions. In this context, it would be worthwhile to heed the warning of Jay Reed:

> Universities are not only hotbeds of military activity, they are adversely affected by the ethical compromises and threats to academic freedom that accompany a Department of Defense presence. The dream of the University as a place of disinterested, pure learning and research is far from reality as scientists and administrators from across the country are paid directly by the military to sit on Department of Defense scientific advisory boards and perform other research. It is naive to think that an abundance of funding from the military does not affect the projects chosen to be worthy of scientific inquiry. University research is not the result of objective decisions made in the spirit of an enlightened quest for knowledge; rather, these scientists' agendas are determined by the bloodthirsty architects of military strategy. (Reed, 2001)

For instance, the Department of Defense, along with a number of other departments and agencies invested in the process of militarization, largely support two main areas of weaponry: space-based armaments and so-called Future Combat Systems. The space weapons being researched in universities around the country include 'microwave guns, space-based lasers, electromagnetic guns, and holographic decoys' while the future combat weapons include 'electric tanks, electro-thermal chemical cannons, [and] unmanned platforms' (Reed, 2001). Such research is carried out at universities such as MIT, which gets 75 percent of its funds for its robotics program from the Department of Defense. How these funds shape research and development and the orientation of theory towards the production of militarized knowledge is evident in MIT's design and production of a kind of RoboMarine called 'the Gladiator', which is a tactical unmanned ground vehicle containing an MT40G medium machine gun, surveillance cameras, and slots for launching paint balls and various smoke rounds, including 'tear gas, or stingball and flashbang grenades' (Cole, 2003). One Pittsburgh paper called it:

> . . . a remote-controlled 'toy,' [with] some real weapons . . . [and] containers for hand grenades that can be used for clearing obstacles and creating a footpath on difficult terrain for soldiers following behind. It also features what looks like organ pipes to produce smoke, and it has a mount on top for a medium-size machine gun or multipurpose assault weapon. (Shropshire, 2005)

Critical commentary apparently not included. In fact, the Gladiator is designed for military crowd-control capabilities, reconnaissance, surveillance, and direct fire missions. Carnegie Mellon University received a $26.4 million Defense Department grant to build six Gladiator prototypes. The University of Texas received funding from the Department of Defense for its Applied Research Laboratories, which develop in five separate labs everything from Navy surveillance systems to 'sensing systems to support U.S. ballistic missile targeting' (Reed, 2001). MIT, one of the largest recipients of defense research money, has also been using its talented research-oriented faculty and students to develop remote sensing and imaging systems that would 'nullify the enemy's ability to hide inside complex mountain terrains and cityscapes' (Edwards, 2006). Universities around the country are funded to do similar military-oriented research, producing everything from global positioning systems to undersea surveillance technologies.