“I wonder how the foreign policies of the United States would look if we wiped out the national boundaries of the world, at least in our minds, and thought of all children everywhere as our own.” Howard Zinn

“Of all the enemies to public liberty, war is, perhaps, the most to be dreaded, because it comprises and develops the germ of every other. War is the parent of armies; from these proceed debts and taxes. . . .” James Madison, “Political Observations,” April 20, 1795.

It would be awesome if Rebekah could hammer Womack on his support for Citizens United & Corporate Personhood. He openly endorsed this democracy-eroding institution in line with Romney (despite 85% of Americans opposing that ruling in a 2010 Washington Post poll). In my mind, the issue of democracy vs. corporate rule is the most fundamental. Until we eliminate the massive corporate campaign financing and the army of corporate lobbyists, progress on all the other issues is nearly insurmountable.

Cheers! Abel

Ike's MIC Speech
Ledbettter, Eisenhower and the MIC
Hartung, Lockheed Martin
De Rugy, "Today we are living Ike's nightmare."
Kaul, "We’re the most war-prone people on earth."
CodePink Protest

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Meier and Martin: Weapons Industry Promotes Weapons Via Video Games
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Swanson, MIC (+C, MM, E) at 50
Turse, Why the Military Invades Our Everyday Lives
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Google Search

Here is the link to all OMNI newsletters:

http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/  For a knowledge-based peace, justice, and ecology movement and an informed citizenry as the foundation for change.

Weapons Makers Using Video Games to Promote Products
Meier and Martin report: "Makers of firearms and related gear have come to see video games as a way to promote their brands to millions of potential customers."

Blackwater Fined $7.5 Million, Dodges Prosecution
Excerpt: "The company agreed to pay a fine of up to $7.5 million and entered a deferred prosecution agreement that will essentially expire after three years of good corporate behavior. Only the corporation admitted wrongdoing; no executives, including former owner Erik Prince, were held individually responsible."

BP Has More Than $2 Billion in Defense Awards Set to Expire

By Danielle Ivory - Nov 30, 2012

BP Plc (BP), suspended from winning new U.S. government contracts for its role in the biggest oil spill in the nation’s history, has military deals with a potential value of more than $2 billion set to expire in the next two years.

The British oil company has at least 11 awards that will be up for competition, said Mimi Schirmacher, a spokeswoman for the Defense Logistics Agency, which buys most of the Pentagon’s fuel.

Nov. 28 (Bloomberg) -- BP Plc, which pleaded guilty to criminal charges after the worst U.S. oil spill in 2010, will be temporarily suspended from winning new contracts from the federal government, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said today. Alex Steel reports on Bloomberg Television's "Market Makers." (Source: Bloomberg)

The defense agency has no plans to apply for a waiver so it can continue to award contracts to BP, Schirmacher said in an e-mail. The office “anticipates receiving offers from other suppliers to fill future requirements,” Schirmacher said.
While she didn’t say when the contracts would be opened for bidding, agencies typically make big awards months to years before the expiration dates. The existing agreements may be valued at as much as $2.43 billion, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

Eight of the 11 contracts will expire before the end of the 2013 fiscal year, Schirmacher said. Robert Wine, a spokesman for London-based BP, declined to comment. BP shares rose 0.1 percent to 431.60 pence in London trading. They have dropped 6.3 percent this year. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on Nov. 28 temporarily banned the company from winning new federal awards due to a “lack of business integrity” in the 2010 Deepwater Horizon well blowout in the Gulf of Mexico. BP on Nov. 15 agreed to plead guilty to criminal charges after the worst oil spill in U.S. history, which killed 11 people.

BP Awards

BP was the Defense Department’s biggest fuel supplier in 2011, the year following the Gulf explosion. That year, it won awards valued at about $1.35 billion, a surge of 33 percent from $1.02 billion in the previous year, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

The EPA didn’t say how long the ban would be in place, though suspensions generally last for fewer than 18 months or until the end of legal proceedings. BP and the government are still in a dispute over civil charges.

The temporary ban doesn’t affect existing contracts. BP won 22 contracts from the Defense Logistics Agency in fiscal 2011, according to Schirmacher.

Contract Competition

Among the companies that might benefit from BP’s suspension are San Antonio, Texas-based Valero Energy (VLO) Corp., San Ramon, California-based Chevron (CVX) Corp., and the Hague, Netherlands-based Royal Dutch Shell Plc. (RDSA). The firms are top suppliers to the U.S. military, the world’s single largest consumer of energy excluding countries.

BP received 49 percent more in defense contracts in that year than the No. 2 fuel supplier, Valero Energy. The third-largest recipient of the contracts was Kuwait National Petroleum Co., followed by Shell, Miami-based World Fuel Services Corp. (INT) and Chevron.

The company on Nov. 15 reached a settlement with the Justice Department, agreeing to pay $4.5 billion to end all criminal charges and resolve securities claims relating to the Gulf explosion. At the time, the company said it hadn’t been advised of any U.S. action on contracts.

BP produces about 770,000 barrels of oil equivalent a day in the U.S., more than 20 percent of the company’s global output. The company had revenue of $131 billion in U.S. last year, more than a third of its global total.
Weissman writes: "Major oil companies are top Pentagon suppliers, I know, but selling fuel to the military is not why they try to control the lion's share of the world's oil and natural gas. Nor do most people have the oil companies in mind when they talk of the military-industrial complex."

NATIONALIZE THE WEAPONS INDUSTRY

By Joseph Gainza

“At the end of the day, it’s about business,” Jeff Johnson, a Boeing executive, says about continuing foreign sales of its F–15 jet fighter. Johnson was quoted in a Feb. 2011 Fortune Magazine article titled “America’s Hottest Export: Weapons.” Weapons design, production and sales is about business, and that is a problem.

During the third presidential debate President Obama said the US spends more on its military than the “next ten nations combined.” Actually, in FY 2011 it was more like the next 14
nations combined, not counting the
wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Weapons production is big business,
very big business, such big business
that even the Pentagon cannot get
Congress to cancel an outmoded or
underperforming weapon system
when doing so would lose jobs in
the districts of powerful Congress
members or result in loss of profit for
weapons makers.

President (and General) Dwight
Eisenhower, three days before leaving
office, warned his “fellow citizens”
against the huge and growing power
of the “military/industrial complex.”

He edited out his original inclusion
of Congress in that phrase; too bad as
it is more accurate. Today he would
need to include the Executive branch,
as US diplomats serve as sales representatives for weapons manufacturers
around the globe, as was confirmed
in diplomatic cables released by
Wikileaks. President Obama has made
such sales a cornerstone of his economic recovery policy.

US arms manufacturers have two
major channels through which they
can sell major weaponry to foreign
countries: foreign military sales,
whereby the Pentagon negotiates a
government-to-government agreement, and direct commercial sales,
which manufacturers negotiates directly with the purchasing country
and must receive a licensure from the
State Department. Either way, weapons corporations make a lot of money.
The government also transfers arms to other countries by giving away weapons from overstocked US arsenals for free or at greatly reduced prices. These transfers are managed by the Defense Department. Loren Thompson, described in the Fortune article as “a veteran defense consultant,” discussing the surge in weapons exports under Obama, says, “It’s about US alliances, it’s about maintaining jobs, and it’s about America’s broader role in the world and what you have to do to maintain that role.” That about sums it up: the demands of Empire combined with the business of arms sales drive the system. They make for a bloated military budget, which sucks resources away from programs to rebuild infrastructure, serve human need, stop environmental destruction, build a carbon and nuclear free energy economy, and put this country on a sustainable path. Empire and corporate profits monopolize all discussion about “national security” as if healthy, educated people, a functioning democracy and a livable planet were not essential to the nation’s future.

Let’s pretend that everyone in the US only cares about the economy, the federal deficit and taxes—listening to the debates it certainly seemed that is how Mr. Obama and Mr. Romney saw it. So, if our only concern is money and jobs then we should be very concerned about the fact that profit for weapons
manufacturers has such a large influence on US military, foreign and domestic policy. Why? According to the Sustainable Defense Task Force, “The Department of Defense (DoD) is one of only a few federal agencies that cannot pass, nor even stand for, the test of an independent auditor. Among this handful of errant agencies, DoD is both the worst offender and the most consistent.”

The task force, created by Republican and Democratic members of Congress, quotes the DoD Inspector General as finding that the weaknesses in the Department’s financial system “affect the safeguarding of assets, proper use of funds, and impair the prevention and identification of fraud, waste and abuse.” The acting Inspector General of the US at the time of the report (June 11, 2010) concurred, saying that these weaknesses “adversely affect the reliability of DoD’s financial data” as well as “the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of its operations.” The Task force went on to say that until the Pentagon gets its financial management in order, something it has not done in over 20 years, it cannot “know how well its expenditures track the national security objectives laid down by the President and Congress.” It reports that the General Accounting Office found that “major weapons programs are suffering $300 billion in cost overruns,” and adds that “the number of weapons programs exhibiting one or more characteristic problems—over budget, late in delivery, less capability than expected—has steadily risen.”

This level of mismanagement
in the Pentagon
suggests corruption is rampant.
The revolving
door between
the Pentagon
and plush jobs
in the “defense”
industry contributes to the
suspicions that
sweet deals are
part of doing
business. Is it
just coincidence
that Boeing’s
head of business
development for
military aircraft,
Lt. Gen. Jeffrey
Kohler, used to
run the Pentagon agency that
oversees arms
exports?
in the capitalist system, a
business must
increase its sales
and profits every
year or it loses
investors. Weapons makers are no
different and so US overseas weapons
sales are skyrocketing. As the Fortune
article states, “foreign arms sales, once
viewed as icing on the cake, are now
the focus of the industry’s growth
strategy.” This reliance runs in both
directions. The chairman of the President’s Export council, the principal national advisory committee on international trade, is W. James McNerney, President and Chief Executive Officer of Boeing.

While there are complex strategies behind US weapons sales, including the desire of the Empire to have allies take on greater “peace keeping” burdens, the drive for weapons sales is as much about profit as about geopolitical strategy. They feed off each other. Take the profit out of the equation and the justification for huge sales of weapons becomes stark: the needs of Empire require it.

Imperial domination predates the modern military/industrial complex, but, as it is today, the drive for markets and profits in the 19th and early 20th centuries was behind US overseas expansion. General Smedley Butler provided one of the clearest expressions of this when he declared: “I helped in the raping of half a dozen Central American republics for the benefit of Wall Street.”

Nationalizing the “defense industry” would not get us where we need to be as a member of the global community. But it would reduce much of the pressure for ever-increasing military budgets and perhaps clear the fog, which surrounds military procurement and policy decisions.

If we take profit-making out of the design and production of weapons, fire the hundreds of corporate lobbyists and eliminate their “campaign contributions,” we remove much of the incentive for the US to be the largest arms dealer, accounting for 30% of the
world’s weapons exports. Public ownership could establish a disincentive for the development of weapons systems to replace systems already the most lethal in the world. Nationalizing the weapons industry might also provide a more level playing field for disarmament advocates to persuade our elected officials that the greatness and security of the US cannot be found in the barrel of a gun.

—Joseph Gainza is a founding member of Vermont Action for Peace and lives in Plainfield, Vermont.
The Military Industrial Complex at 50

By davidswanson - Posted on 20 December 2011

This book is the most comprehensive collection available explaining what the military industrial complex (MIC) is, where it comes from, what damage it does, what further destruction it threatens, and what can be done and is being done to chart a different course.

Authors from within and without the MIC include:
Ellen Brown • Paul Chappell • Helena Cobban • Ben Davis • Jeff Fogel • Bunny Greenhouse • Bruce Gagnon • Clare Hanrahan • John Heuer • Steve Horn • Robert Jensen • Karen Kwiatkowski • Judith Le Blanc • Bruce Levine • Ray McGovern • Wally Myers • Robert Naiman • Gareth Porter • Chris Rodda • Allen Ruff • Mia Austin Scoggins • Tony Russell • Lisa Savage • Mary Beth Sullivan • Coleman Smith • Dave Shreve • David Swanson • Pat Elder • Jonathan Williams • Ann Wright (Read short bios of authors.)

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The MIC kills large numbers of people, endangers us, hollows out our economy, transfers our wealth to a tiny elite, devastates the natural environment, and threatens civil liberties, the rule of law, and representative government.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower found the nerve in his farewell speech in 1961 to articulate one of the most prescient, potentially valuable, and tragically as yet unheeded warnings of human history:

“In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.

“We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes. We should take nothing for granted. Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together.”

This collection shows that the “total influence” of the MIC has increased, the disastrous rise of misplaced power is no longer merely a potential event, our liberties and democratic processes are in a state of collapse, and that Ike himself disastrously misinformed the citizenry when he claimed that the very monster he warned of had been “compelled” by the need for “defense.”

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The Complex: How the Military Invades Our Everyday Lives

at 12:00am, November 1, 2009.
Follow TomDispatch on Twitter @TomDispatch.

Email Print
By Nick Turse

An eye-opening investigation of the all-pervasive, presence of the Pentagon in daily life -- a real-world Matrix come alive.

Here is the new, hip, high-tech military-industrial complex -- an omnipresent, hidden-in Plain Sight system of systems that penetrates all our lives. Mapping out what should more properly be called the Military-Industrial-Technological-Entertainment-Scientific-Media-Intelligence-Corporate Complex, historian Nick Turse demonstrates just how extensively the Pentagon, through its little-noticed contacts (and contracts) with America's major corporations, has taken hold of the nation.

From iPods to Starbucks coffee to Oakley sunglasses, Turse investigates the remarkable range of military incursions into the civilian world: the Pentagon's collaborations with Hollywood filmmakers, its outlandish schemes to weaponize the wild kingdom, its joint ventures with the World Wrestling Federation and NASCAR. He shows the inventive ways the military, desperate for new recruits, now targets children and young adults, tapping into the "culture of cool" by making 'friends' on MySpace.

A striking vision of a brave new world of remote-controlled rats and super-soldiers who need no sleep, The Complex will change our understanding of the militarization of America. We are a long way from Eisenhower's military-industrial complex: this is the essential book for understanding its twenty-first-century progeny.
Breaking the Chains, A Review of Henry Giroux’s *The University in Chains: Confronting the Military-Industrial-Academic Complex*
by Scott D. Morris / August 18th, 2007

“Of all the enemies of public liberty war is perhaps the most to be dreaded, because it comprises and develops the germ of every other . . . No nation could preserve its freedom in the midst of continual warfare.”

– James Madison, “Political Observations,” 1795

“God is pro-war”

– Jerry Falwell, 2004

The ways in which a stark and dreadful militarization permeates and impacts US and global culture is evidenced by even a cursory examination of recent news reports and events. For example, the film “300,” a xenophobic celebration of hyper-masculine militarized mass killing and brutality, was the number one DVD rental last week; “The Bourne Ultimatum,” a film rooted in CIA torture, deceit, assassination and espionage, was last week’s top grossing box-office film; *Congressional Research Reports for the People* estimates Congress has approved roughly $610 billion for the military operations instituted since 9/11; the House approved a $459.6 billion Pentagon budget for 2008 (not including supplemental spending on Iraq and Afghanistan or nuclear weapons programs through the DOE that would push the figure well-beyond $600 billion); *Just Foreign Policy* reported one million Iraqis killed (as of August 11, 2007) as a consequence of the US aggression initiated in March 2003; The *New Yorker’s* most read online article last week was “The Black Sites: a rare look inside the C.I.A.’s secret interrogation program; the Air Force announced that “hunter-killer” unmanned drones “loaded” with “a ton and a half of guided missiles and bombs, known as ‘The Reaper,’” will soon be headed to the grim killing fields in Iraq and Afghanistan; “Operation Straight Up,” a right-wing apocalyptic Christian evangelical troupe, will embark on a Defense Department endorsed “Military Crusade in Iraq,” to push “End Times theology” on US troops and deliver “an encouraging word from God to press on to victory; the Bush Administration proposed to send $63 billion in military aid and weapons to the most volatile region in the world, the Middle East; the Senate passed an enhanced surveillance bill that includes few safeguards to protect US citizens from spying while oversight is placed into the hands
of Bush Administration henchmen Director of National Intelligence Mike McConnell, and sycophant Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, etc., etc., etc.

This creeping militarization across economics, religion, politics and culture functions as a form of public pedagogy that conditions and directs our values, attitudes, beliefs, desires, allegiances, identities and identifications and is thus a matter of serious interest for those concerned about public education, the direction of knowledge, and meaningful democratic politics in their wider applications. The penetration of matters military into all corners of our social and cultural lives C. Wright Mills referred to as “military metaphysics — the cast of mind that defines . . . reality as basically military.”

When our reality and “cast of mind” are essentially defined militarily, how, we might ask, are we impacted as political, social, intellectual and cultural beings? How can we engage this “military metaphysics” in ways that aid us in developing tools for thinking critically about the causes, agents and effects of militarism, and the concomitant forces of capitalist corporatism, and, more importantly, how can we use that critical understanding toward collective work that will transform the institutions responsible for the militarization and corporatization of US politics and culture? That militarization and corporatism will impact our political and personal lives in multiple ways, perhaps critical, is a stark and inescapable reality that must be confronted, sooner rather than later, with all of our intellectual, moral and political energy. These issues and questions, and much more, are at the core of Henry Giroux’s latest book *The University in Chains*, a rigorous interrogation and relentless critique of the corporate, military and right-wing forces assaulting the academy (and beyond) in the United States, as well as an insightful and imaginative explication of how we might take-on the challenge of developing a meaningful democratic political culture and substantive democratic public spheres as part of a larger collective project dedicated to transforming the conditions and institutions that currently dominate so much, and threaten so many, of our lives. [Chap. 4, “Breaking the Chains: A Strategy to Retake the University.” –Dick]

Many readers will find it surprising that what they consider a bastion of free inquiry, objective thought and unbiased research, i.e. the university system, is a key institution in US culture in which this “military metaphysics” is increasingly present and influential; it is becoming, in John Armitage’s apt phrase, a “hypermodern militarized knowledge factory.” The militarizing factory system of university education not only includes “150 military education institutions in the United States” but also hundreds of university sites in which richly Pentagon-funded and directed research and development is pursued, military personnel (and others) develop the values and tools of the “warfare state,” and students undertake programs of study in preparation for service to “departments and agencies” of the warrior state.

The Association of American Universities has argued, “The nation must cultivate young talent and orient national economic, political, and education systems” to achieve the mutually linked goals of expanding global markets for US corporations and for victory in the war on terrorism. That this
pursuit of military superiority and corporate domination through the university system of research and development goes largely unchallenged by academics, as well as society in general, should be a source of profound concern and pointed critique.

**The militarization of the university is present in many guises.** For example, former CIA director and president of Texas A&M, and current Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, is just one small indicator of how the “US security state” (a nexus of political, military and corporate power and interests) is penetrating the university system. Giroux shares a telling anecdote from Cary Nelson who was asked by the UCSD provost, a former CIA employee, during an evaluation of the English Department, “if it were true the literature department would only hire communist faculty?” The question was not a joke! Nor is it a joke, as noted by the *Wall Street Journal*, that the CIA has become a “growing force on campus,” or that FBI director Robert Mueller has a desire “to foster exchanges between academia and the FBI,” or, how “the secrecy imposed on scholars working for the CIA” sabotages interrogation of prevailing notions, critiques of conventional wisdom, and challenges to power and authority and thus is “antithetical to the notion of the university as a democratic sphere” dedicated to critical debate, discussion and dialogue.

But why is it a problem if professors and universities are in league with US intelligence agencies and the militarized state? Should not the university be disciplined in a post 9/11 world to produce a public discourse in support of US domination of the globe through military might, the eradication of a socialist leaning New Deal society, and encourage a blurring between church and state,” all in the name of freedom of inquiry and the spread of democracy? While some do believe the university should “be disciplined” in these directions (witness ACTA — the right-wing “American Council of Trustees” — and their denunciation of the academy as a “weak link” in the war on terror, the recent firing of Ward Churchill, or, the Senate Committee bill passed in Arizona that calls for a $500 fine if professors are caught “advocating one side of a social, political, or cultural issue that is a matter of partisan controversy,” etc.), Giroux describes how this marriage between the academy and the militarized state surrenders “the idea of the university as a site of critical dialogue and debate, public service and socially responsible research” to the pursuit of military aggression, profit enhancement, right-wing ideologies and global political and economic power.

In short, the university as an institution potentially dedicated to a substantive democratic culture, critical inquiry and the public good is transmogrified into a repressive sycophant “complicit with a larger set of institutional…commitments to war, violence, fear, surveillance, and the erosion of civic society . . .” Given this “clash of imperatives,” we should consider “what the role of higher education might be [or should be]” when “the government has a free hand to do whatever it wants in the name of national security,” (Dave Price)¹² and reflect on how we might guard intellectual and moral integrity.

President Eisenhower’s oft-cited 1961 warning that “we must guard against . . . the military-industrial complex . . . [because] the disastrous rise of misplaced power . . . will . . . endanger our
liberties [and] democratic processes,” also included a call to protect the universities from the stark evils of militarization. Eisenhower feared that war and violence would become the organizing principle of society and thus threaten not only democracy but the very idea of, and occasion for, politics. If politics, in brief, is defined as the way we organize ourselves in society around matters of human life, but we develop a society rooted in “military metaphysics” that is dominated by and organized around militarization, i.e. a dreadful structural machine that functions largely to produce profits, death and destruction, we undermine our possibilities for enhancing and protecting human life and thus destroy the possibility of real politics.

Before delivery, Eisenhower excised the phrase “military-industrial-academic complex” from his speech, but still warned that “the free university . . . free ideas and scientific discovery” as well as “intellectual curiosity” were threatened by “the power of money” working in the interest of the militarization of US society and profits for the arms industry. Senator William Fulbright retrieved the excised phrase later in the 1960s, at the height of the US attack on Vietnam, and noted how “the university fails its higher purpose” if it surrenders to the federal government’s pursuit of militarization and the corporate pursuit of profits. “The fundamentally anti-democratic nature of the military-industrial-complex,” about which Eisenhower and Fulbright warned has, unfortunately, continued to penetrate all corners of US culture, including the academy. Higher education has become an institution “that actively embrace[s] multiple constituencies and forms of patronage provided by the federal government, military, and corporate interests,” three essentially authoritarian structures subversive of democracy.

While it seems clear that values promoting substantive democratic practices and structures along with a democratic public spirit should be at the core of university and public education, “few in power,” in Andrew Bacevich’s words, “have openly considered whether...cultivating permanent global military superiority might be at odds with American principles.” One suspects those in power have other interests to occupy their time. Those other interests include producing an authoritarian politics, privatizing the economy, and employing and expanding an aggressive military machine that develop ever greater control and influence over who lives and who dies, and who wins and who loses, along with increased powers to exclude or include, to eviscerate civil rights, and to subvert democratic social values. Giroux argues persuasively that totalitarian power is becoming the norm in the US “as life is more ruthlessly regulated and increasingly placed in the hands of military and state power.”

One consequence of this accelerated militarization is a dual politics of disposability “shaped by the forces of empire,” witnessed on the one hand in “legalized” abuse, torture, rendition and murder, and on the other hand in the impunity from punishment enjoyed by those responsible for these brutal policies. In short, power brings impunity, and impunity protects power. Under conditions in which militarism and war serve as structuring forces in the society, violence, militarization and aggression, at least for the rulers, functions as “a source of pride rather than alarm.” We should consider the impact on the rest of us when, in Michael Geyer’s words, “civil
society organizes itself for the production of violence.” Across US culture, in multiple representational forms ranging from video games, to Internet sites, to films, to television programs, to advertisements, Giroux notes, “hyper-violence provides the organizing optic...while legitimating the fascistic assumption that violence is the only reasonable solution to all . . . problems.” A culture so rich in death tends to treat life very cheaply, as perversely seen in the horrible treatment of injured US soldiers returning from Iraq who are kept in rooms that include “mold, rot, mice and cockroaches” and grimly in what Bob Herbert calls “the apocalypse in Baghdad.”

A number of questions arise: How do we work through the tension between public opinions and attitudes that are generally opposed to military aggression, torture and mass violence, and the increasing militarization of “values, practices, ideologies, social relations and cultural representations” that works to not only merge politics and violence, but recode our memories and direct our experiences? How do we reverse the transition from the “welfare state,” that at least recognizes some notion of a social contract in which we are responsible for one another, to the “warfare state,” that thwarts dissent, debilitates public debate, enforces moral absolutes, celebrates aggression, and thus undermines participatory democracy? How do we overcome the capacity of the militarized state to both create “a disconnected hardening of individuals to suffering,” and to erase from view the massive trauma, brutality and barbaric destruction imposed by the US machine of death abroad? What is the proper response among academics when dissent is seen as unpatriotic and critical citizenship is considered treasonous under conditions in which militarism conditions and directs not only our perceptions of reality but the ways in which we relate with that reality?

These and other questions, offered or intimated by Giroux, must be critically engaged during a historical period in which the United States spends more on the military than the rest of the world combined, is the world’s greatest purveyor of deadly arms, is dedicated to illegal military aggression against anyone, anytime and anywhere, and is “enthralled with [a] military power [that] has become central to our national identity,” while our massive arsenal of highly destructive weapons signifies “who we are and what we stand for.” (Bacevich)

Nick Turse reports that roughly “350 colleges and universities conduct Pentagon funded research.” The Pentagon’s economic and ideological power “can often dictate the sorts of research that get undertaken and the sorts that don’t.” Giroux refers to the enormous power and burgeoning budget of the Pentagon’s military apparatus as possessing a “powerful arm-twisting ability capable of bending higher education to its will,” that is an “ominous and largely ignored disaster in the making . . . ” In short, because of Pentagon power within the academy there is a dedication toward “delivering science and technology solutions to the warfighter.” For example, in 2003 Penn State received $149 million from “the military war machine,” for research and development, while the University of Texas received $87 million, and Carnegie Mellon $60 million often to support research in space-based weapons systems, including “microwave guns, space-based lasers, electromagnetic guns, and holographic decoys,” and Future Combat Systems.
such as “electric tanks, electro-thermal chemical cannons, [and] unmanned platforms.” (Jay Reed)

Giroux suggests that those working in the “hypermodern militarized knowledge factories” should ask a number of critical and ‘uncomfortable” questions: “What role do intellectuals play in the conditions that allow theory and knowledge to be appropriated [. . . in ways that] produce lethal weapons, fuel an arms race . . . and corrupt ethical standards...and what can they do politically to prevent [. . . their work] from being militarized . . .?” And crucially, how do opposition and resistance to militarization in the academy “connect to [public intellectual] work and extend [students’ and teachers’] sense of social and political responsibility to the world outside of the academy?” One vital task for intellectuals is to employ critical pedagogical practices that promote ethical citizenship, encourage a willingness to take risks and responsibilities for a more substantive democracy, and “connect knowledge and power in the interests of social responsibility and justice.”

_The University in Chains_, is an intellectually rigorous and politically challenging contribution to our understanding of US culture, US politics and US education in our increasingly (and dangerously) militarized society and world, and a careful examination of the ways in which the capitalist market, the Pentagon-system, and right-wing fundamentalism corrupt and condition the academy and culture. _The University in Chains_ is a stunning tour-de-force that meticulously examines how the multi-tiered and interpenetrating military, corporate and right-wing assaults on the university undermine higher education as a potentially and necessary democratic public sphere in which students and teachers could, and should, develop a sense of individual and social agency in the context of experiencing meaningful democratic social relations while identifying, critiquing and working to overcome authoritarian forms of power and authority.

Giroux writes with a clarity and urgency that is riveting and engaging. He operates from a fundamental recognition, “the academy and democracy are in peril,” and from a decisive question, “What is the task of educators at a time when the forces of democracy appear to be in retreat and the emerging ideologies and practices of militarization, corporatism, and political fundamentalism bear down on every aspect of individual and collective experience?” In other words, what are the responsibilities of public intellectuals during a period in which critical thought, rational considerations, radical qualities of character, and a culture of questioning, all necessary to authentic higher education and intellectual creativity, are under assault by corporate, religious, ideological and economic forces opposed to any form of substantive democratic politics and pedagogy? What role can public intellectuals, whether professors or students, perform in opening up the democratic potential of the university through “raising important questions about the mutually informing relationship among higher education, critical pedagogical practices, and the promise of a substantive democracy”?

While “contestation and struggle” still exist (often in isolation) in the academy, the university’s
role as a “counterinstitution,” willing to question assumptions, interrogate prevailing notions, critique conventional wisdom, and, importantly, challenge and expose power, has been considerably undermined by militarization, corporatism, and right-wing “patriotically correct” fundamentalism. As such, teachers, students and citizens must take on the individual and social responsibility founded in the links between both critical thought and critical intervention, and rigorous intellectual work and deliberate political engagement, to invigorate the academy and “reclaim higher education as a democratic public sphere and counterinstitution” in which civic responsibility, a culture of critique, and a commitment to social engagement are rooted in a critical democratic politics and pedagogy. A question attends these insights: in whose interest, in what direction, with what goals, and with what likely consequences should pedagogical work be carried out, inside and outside higher education?

Giroux argues that higher education must move beyond the academy in ways that connect projects in higher education to the “enabling and development of social movements, public spheres, and groups of critical citizens” who recognize that in a globally interconnected and interdependent world we can no longer refuse to confront injustice, aggression, dogma and exploitation because no one is immune from the harmful, and potentially catastrophic political, personal and social consequences of militarization, corporatism and right-wing fundamentalism. As part of a pressing process of “demilitarizing knowledge, social relations, and values,” intellectuals, students, cultural workers and citizens must move beyond the simple “consumption of knowledge” and embark on projects in oppositional and resistance pedagogy dedicated to knowledge “production for peaceful and socially just ends.” In brief, Giroux suggests, any form of peace-producing and substantive democratic education, inside and outside the academy, must work to link knowledge to commitment, learning to social change, understanding to political engagement, consciousness to empowerment and collective resistance, and the classroom to those larger social forces and public discourses that bear down on our lives in multiple contexts.

Such resistance, we can add, must be accomplished while working through the tensions between patience and urgency. We must have the patience to think rationally, reflect critically, deliberate meaningfully and free ourselves from illusions during a period in which, as Gabriel Kolko points out, “our choices are increasingly linked to their implications for human survival.” Consequently, critically reflective patience, though important, cannot be pursued at the expense of social engagement rooted in meaningful participation and effective shaping of decisions directed toward the mobilization of collective resistance to those forces intent on increasing social calamities and human suffering. In other words, we must work to ensure that we do not lose the future in the present, or the present in the future. Our safest path under these conditions is to oppose and resist the “death dealing ideology [and practices] of militarization,” capitalist corporatism, and dogmatism wherever they exist and whenever we confront them by engaging and expanding pedagogical practices that extend “notions of agency, empowerment, and responsibility that
operate in the service of life, democratic struggles, and the expansion of human rights.”

There is no longer a question about whether we should resist and oppose military aggression, ideological narrowness, and corporate profit-seeking inside or outside the universities but how best to express our resistance and opposition over the short and long-term, inside and outside the academy. Corporatism, militarism, and fundamentalism operate in manifold ways to shut-down hopes and possibilities, not least of which is their capacity to debilitate dreams. The subversion of our capacity to imagine sabotages our reality to live. A reality without dreams is barbarism, a barbarism witnessed each day in the stark and dreadful consequences of US imperial pursuits.

Here is where Giroux’s notion of “a pedagogy of hope,” as it links to critical thought and imagination and critical intervention and citizenship, is vital and informative. The growing culture of fear and paranoia, the constantly invoked threats of terror, the intensifying cinema of hyper-violence and mutilation, the creeping right-wing dogmatism, the silencing, marginalizing and firing of dissidents in the academy, coupled with an absence of meaningful democratic public options produce forms of demoralization, cynicism and despair that undermine hopes and possibilities for engaged citizenship, social commitments and fighting back. Addressing this “crisis of agency” is at the heart of creating conditions for believing that a substantive democratic politics and pedagogy toward critical citizenship is possible and recognizing they are necessary. Giroux notes, “. . . hope is a precondition not only for merging matters of agency and social responsibility, but also for imagining a future that does not repeat the present.” He notes elsewhere, in an interview with the Media Education Foundation (www.mef.tv), “If we continue to reproduce the present we may be reproducing a present that eliminates the future.” In addition, we might add, if we permit the present to crush our dreams, we lose the future. Hence, there is his call for an ethical and political vision, commitment and practice that works to not only rigorously negotiate and understand the complexities of history, and resolutely engage and change, so as not to suffer, the present, but importantly “to take students beyond the world they already know,” to one in which we not only “believe that democracy is desirable and possible,” but necessary. At its best, Giroux reminds us, “Pedagogy does not avoid commitment, it makes [commitment] possible!”

In the end, one is deeply inspired by Giroux’s impassioned concern for human rights, meaningful democracy and the future, and empowered by his critical insights into how we can break the chains and transform the university into a substantive democratic public space committed to providing students and global citizens with tools and skills to address our most urgent crises, to critically understand how economic, ideological and military power works and circulates through multiple sites of cultural production, distribution and consumption, and, to intervene as empowered and self-critical agents in the world in ways that expand and ensure the pursuit of greater and better conditions of social justice and democracy.

*The University in Chains* should be essential reading for everyone inside and outside the academy concerned with the increasing and foreboding militarization of the world, the corporate takeover
of every corner of human life, and the narrowing ideological impositions of right-wing “super-patriot” fundamentalists. The book moves crucially from critique to a call for intervention and is therefore indispensable for those attentive to the need for fighting back, as well as those interested in matters of public pedagogy, public education, social justice, human rights, and producing a meaningful democratic vision, culture and practice.

At a time in human history when the perils resulting from silence and passivity in the face of destructive power and institutional malevolence soon promise to outweigh the perils of confronting that power and evil, Giroux’s call for a pedagogy of critical conviction, political engagement and social intervention is imperative in the continuing struggle to overcome practical political powerlessness, reclaim public space as a democratic sphere, and break the chains of injustice and oppression.

The perpetuation of a highly destructive and potentially terminal US militarism across so many spheres of our existence, in culture, politics, ideology, economics and academia, part of the large-scale “process by which civil society organizes itself for the production of violence,” (Geyer), all captured so forcefully in Giroux’s The University in Chains, calls to mind a “clash of imperatives” noted in the 1955 Russell-Einstein Manifesto: “Here, then, is the problem which we present to you, stark and dreadful and inescapable: Shall we put an end to the human race; or shall mankind renounce war?”

* Related Article: The University in Chains: An Interview with Henry A. Giroux, by Scott Jaschik

1. See “Top United States DVD Rentals for the week ending 5 August 2007,” online at: [www.imdb.com/boxoffice/rentals](http://www.imdb.com/boxoffice/rentals)

2. See “Movie Box Office: August 3-5, 2007.”


5. See “Iraqi Deaths Due to US Invasion,” Just Foreign Policy.


8. Max Blumenthal, “‘Kill or Convert,’ Brought to You by the Pentagon,” The Nation, August 8, 2007. Also see, “Military Crusade in Iraq.”


11. Ibid. p.19.
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This article was posted on Saturday, August 18th, 2007 at 5:02am and is filed under Academic Freedom, Book Review, Culture, Democracy, Education, General.

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1. **Brian McKenna** said on August 22nd, 2007 at 8:30pm #

Henry Giroux is one of the most important cultural activists alive today. He helps me to better understand a figure in my own higher education circuit, Peter McPherson. McPherson, the former President of Michigan State University (when he simultaneously served as economic czar in Iraq for President Bush), has just helped sell the Wall Street Journal to Rupert Murdoch in his new position as Chairman of the Hoard of Dow Jones. That’s 2 failures he’s been a part of.

The Banker and former USAID chief (and close friend of Dick Cheney) is a very active “revolving door” hegemonic intellectual. He helps influence the privatization and militarization of higher education through his other current role as President of the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges: [http://www.nasulgc.org/About_Nasulgc/about_nasulgc.htm](http://www.nasulgc.org/About_Nasulgc/about_nasulgc.htm)

He has no Ph.D.

There’s a cultural war in our midst on campus but too many faculty are asleep at the wheel.

2. **bob feldman** said on November 14th, 2007 at 9:29am #

For more information about the U.S. military-industrial-university complex, including current university ties to the Pentagon’s Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) weapons research think-tank, you might be interested in checking out the following link.–bob

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3. **Military Industrial Congress Complex**
   www.iraqwar.org/micomplex.htm
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4. **Military-Industrial Complex Speech, Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1961**
   coursesa.matrix.msu.edu/~hst306/documents/indust.html
   *Military-Industrial Complex* Speech, Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1961 ... Our people expect their President and the *Congress* to find essential agreement on issues of ...

5. **Ending the Military-Industrial-Congressional Complex | Common ...**
   Sep 11, 2007 - Until we rein in what Eisenhower originally called the "military-industrial-congressional complex," we will never have a peace-based economy.

6. **Military-industrial-congressional complex - The Free Dictionary**
   www.thefreedictionary.com/Military-industrial-congressional+complex
   mil·i·tar·y-in·dus·tri·al complex (m l -t r - n-d s tr - l). n. The aggregate of a nation's armed forces and the *industries* that supply their equipment, materials, and ...

7. **Robert Reich - Military Industrial Congressional Complex -**
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   May 26, 2011 - Uploaded by karinmoveon
   Robert Reich - *Military Industrial Congressional Complex* - YouTube. Subscribe 31,894. Top Comments ...

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   www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLC45A18797FB86ED7

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