

Academia and the National Security State

Introduction

In this presentation, I trace a century of corruption of US academia from its reliance on Wall Street and foundation funding, through the militarisation of scientific research during and after World II, into its deep embeddedness in the US national security state that emerged in the late 1940s.

My thesis is that academia, in the United States and elsewhere, has betrayed its civic duty and the public trust invested in it by becoming an embedded, mercenary force serving the interests of the Establishment.

US Academia and Wall Street

By the mid 1930s, all the most prestigious universities in the United States had fallen under the control of Wall Street. As the former emeritus professor of International Political Economy, Kees van der Pijl, observes,

Harvard, with the largest endowment at the time, had a J.P. Morgan management; its largest donor was Standard Oil (including its key owner families, the Whitneys, Harknesses, and Rockefellers). Yale (with the second largest endowment) had essentially the same donor base, though slightly more dispersed, and was under Morgan-Rockefeller joint management. The University of Chicago (fourth largest endowment) was of course an original Rockefeller-run institution; MIT (seventh) was under Du Pont management [...] And so on and so forth. (van der Pijl, 2014, p. 79)

Carroll Quigley, in *Tragedy and Hope* (1966), notes that “the large endowments of these institutions required constant consultation with the financiers of Wall Street.” The heads of those institutions, moreover, “usually owed their jobs” to those financiers.

Anthony C. Sutton observed in 1976 that

It is understandable that universities and research organizations, dependent on financial aid from foundations that are controlled by this same New York financial elite, would hardly want to support and to publish research on [certain] aspects of international politics. The bravest of trustees is unlikely to bite the hand that feeds his organization. (Sutton, 2016, p. 11)

Academic knowledge production thereby gets skewed towards the interests of finance capital, meaning that anti-establishment literature is rare in academia (Sutton, 2016, pp. 168, 173).

Foundation Funding

The impact of funding from the major foundations on academia is hard to overstate. For example, political science professor Harold Laski observed in 1930 that

[T]he foundations do not control, simply because, in the simple and direct sense of the word, there is no need for them to do so. They have only to indicate the immediate direction of their minds for the whole university world to discover that it always meant to gravitate swiftly to that angle of the intellectual compass. (cited in Parmar, 2012, p. 61)

By 1934 in the United States, foundation funding exceeded federal spending on education, with the majority of it (61%) being targeted at higher education (van der Pijl, 2014, p. 79).

The educationalist Eduard Lindeman wrote that “Those who live in anticipation of receiving foundation grants are the more servile” (1936, p. 19). Indeed, it is hard to see how academics in receipt of major grant funding can take any critical distance from the centres of power in their research.

World War II and the Militarization of Scientific Research

During World War II, scientific research became heavily subordinated to the war effort. According to the Office of Technology Assessment ([1995](#), pp. 12-14),

At the start of World War II, virtually all of the scientific talent of the country resided in universities and private industry. The United States military did not have a large, research-oriented scientific establishment, but had a growing need for scientific knowledge [...] Through arrangements with academia, the US military established centers of excellence that developed radar, artillery fuses, atomic weapons, and a new and esoteric discipline of applied mathematics, operations research.

A civilian organization called the Office of Scientific Research and Development (1941-1947) was established to coordinate and accelerate scientific research for military purposes.

A significant amount of that scientific research was classified, the epitome being the Manhattan Project (1942-1945), where well over 100,000 people were sworn to secrecy regarding their work on developing the atom bomb (Atomic Heritage Foundation, [2014](#)).

The Postwar Militarisation of Scientific Research

Norbert Wiener, the founder of cybernetics, warned in 1947 that the militarisation of scientific research must not be allowed to continue in peacetime because of the unethical uses to which such research could be put (Wiener, 1947, p. 46).

Nevertheless, the US military established three new centres of civilian research after the war. In 1945, the US Army Air Forces initiated Project RAND in collaboration with Douglas Aircraft Company, which became the RAND Corporation in 1948 with an interest-free \$1 million loan provided by the Ford Foundation (Philanthropy Roundtable, [1948](#)). The Navy established the Operations Evaluation Group in 1945, with MIT contracted to organise it. And the Army founded the Operations Research Office at Johns Hopkins University in 1948 (Office of Technology Assessment, 1995, pp. 12-14).

In addition, the National Science Foundation was founded in 1950 as an outgrowth of the activities of the Office of Naval Research. MIT's Lincoln Laboratory was created in 1951 as a military R&D laboratory focused on North American air defence. The Special Operations Research Organisation (SORO) at American University in Washington, D.C. was established in 1956 to conduct research for the DoD relating to counterinsurgency, unconventional warfare, and psychological operations.

In all such cases, we are looking at the ongoing militarisation of scientific research.

Federal Research Grants

According to MIT professor Kate Brown ([2020](#)), "From the end of World War II until the 1970s, federal grants paid for 70% of university research. The largest federal donors were the Department of Defense, the US Atomic Energy Agency, and a dozen federal security agencies."

President Eisenhower warned in his farewell address of 1961 that "The prospect of domination of the nation's scholars by Federal employment, project allocations, and the power of money is ever present and is gravely to be regarded."

Eisenhower's warning was somewhat ironic, given that he himself, as a 5-star General, had proposed the establishment of what became the Operations Research Organisation in 1948 (Office of Technology Assessment, 1995, pp. 15-16). That same year, Eisenhower was appointed President of Columbia University, a fitting symbol of the ties between leading US universities and the military.

Social Science as Intelligence Gathering

The social sciences received 30% as much federal funding as the natural sciences between 1950-1982 (Klinger, 2019, p. 13). They, too, were subordinated to the requirements of the US national security state.

Van der Pijl (2014, p. 48) identifies the emergence of what he calls an "academic intelligence base" in the post-WWII era, involving "the subordination of US scholarship to the state as providers of 'intelligence.'"

In the words of International Relations Professor Inderjeet Parmar, US social scientists were called upon to "supply policy-makers with usable knowledge and understanding of the world and its strategic countries, regions, and underlying transformative social, political, and ideological forces" (Parmar, 2011, p. 183).

This entailed the creation of new fields such as Area Studies, American Studies, Soviet Studies, and Development Studies, as well as a campaign to promote and develop the existing field of International Relations.

Harvard's International Seminar

The CIA covertly enlisted Political Science professors to help identify and recruit potential allies among the foreign students, academics, and government officials that were circulating as a result of the exchange programmes created by the foundations (Roelofs, 2003, p. 41).

A prominent example is Harvard's International Seminar, directed by Henry Kissinger, who was still a graduate student when it was established in 1951. It invited foreigners who were, in Kissinger's words, "highly placed economically and politically in their own nation" and could be used "to place American policy in a favorable light in these foreign nations" (cited in Faludi, [1979](#)).

The International Seminar was financed entirely through grants from private foundations, several of which were exposed as CIA conduits in 1967 (Faludi, 1979; "CIA Financial Links," [1967](#)). Although Kissinger denied knowing anything about CIA support, his correspondence with William Elliott (who appointed him director of the International Seminar) proves otherwise (Price, [2016](#), p. 104).

Psychological Warfare

Most social science funding went to Psychology as academics played a key part in the development of psychological warfare (Simpson, 1994).

Project Troy in 1950 was a three-month project directed by RAND's Hans Speier. It brought in academics mostly from MIT and Harvard to consider new directions in psychological warfare.

The Psychological Strategy Board (1951-1953) served to coordinate psychological warfare and propaganda activities across different parts of the US government. Renowned social scientists were appointed to the board (Oren, [2003](#), p.145).

44 universities participated in the CIA's MKULTRA programme (1953-1963), which experimented on unwitting subjects using electroshock, radiation, covert drugging, and other nefarious means (McCoy, 2007, p. 29). Although funds were distributed through a series of front organisations, a few key individuals in each institution did know about CIA sponsorship (Miyamoto, 2018, p. 17).

The Ford Foundation and Attacks on Marxism

The director of the Ford Foundation, McGeorge Bundy, reflected that "everything the Foundation did could be regarded as 'making the World safe for capitalism'" (cited in Silk & Silk, 1981, p. 147).

The Ford Foundation was stridently anti-Marxist. For example, in 1950, it and the CIA jointly funded the establishment of the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), whose mission, according to historian Frances Stonor Saunders (2000, p.1), was to "nudge the intelligentsia of western Europe away from its lingering fascination with Marxism and Communism towards a view more accommodating of 'the American way.'"

In 1951 the Ford Foundation commissioned a report, to be presented as “independent of the foundation, arrived at objectively and in accordance with accepted canons of scholarship,” whose purpose was “to discredit academic Marxism, particularly in Western Europe” (Berman, 1983, p. 31). This would involve getting a respected academic to deliberately conflate Marxism and Stalinism, an intellectually dishonest move.

The Ford Foundation and Behaviouralism

In 1953, the Ford Foundation consulted with CIA director Allen Dulles to work out how best its funding could be used to support research projects that met CIA needs (Cumings, 1999, p. 184).

In particular, the Ford Foundation was the lead funder of behavioural science research in the 1950s and 1960s. According to political scientist Clyde Barrow (2017, p. 445), behaviouralism “emphasized arcane methodological principles, models, and elaborate data collection techniques, while avoiding vital political issues, such as racial and gender inequality, labor strife, poverty, and the sources of imperial warfare.”

Political scientists Albert Somit and Joseph Tanenhaus estimated in 1967 that at least 90% of foundation money channelled to their discipline came from Ford (Somit & Tanenhaus, 1967, p. 765).

The dominance of behaviouralism meant that alternative approaches within political science, such as Marxism, became marginalised (Roelefs, 2012, p. 36), as did “the problems of man and society that really matter,” to quote Noam Chomsky (2002, p. 138).

Finding a Coherent Theory of Society and Politics

The Soviet Union had in Marxism a theoretical basis for society that commanded widespread approval and respect in the mid 20th century, not only within the communist bloc, but also within large sections of the Left in the West.

In contrast, the West was characterised by what political scientist Gabriel Almond (1950, p. 235) called “the absence of a coherent theory of society and politics,” which created “ideological confusion.” Almond called upon the social sciences to foster a “democratic ideological consensus” to overcome this problem and enhance “elite discipline.” In effect, he was calling for “the creation of a creed that could unify American elites in the same way that Communist elites could rally around Leninism” (Gilman, 2007, p. 53).

Consensus History

So-called “consensus history” offered one response to Almond’s clarion call. Out went Charles Beard’s class-based interpretation of US history, and in came a new narrative spuriously premised on what Richard Hofstadter (1989 [1948], pp. xxviii, xxxiii) called “the absence of deep, persistent, and consistent class conflict” in the United States.

Even though US liberalism had only originated as a political ideology in the mid-1930s (Gunnell, 2001), consensus historians portrayed liberalism as the “vital center” of US politics (Schlesinger, 1949) and as “not only the dominant, but even the sole, intellectual tradition” in

the United States (Trilling, 2012 [1950], p. xv). Louis Hartz (1955) went even further by claiming that the United States, without the baggage of European history, was “born liberal.”

All of this was to ignore feudal and aristocratic traditions in the United States as well as the history of slavery. It was a perversion of history for ideological purposes.

Norman Dodd, who served as research director for the Reece Committee investigation into tax-exempt foundations (1952-1954), revealed in 1982 that the foundations had sought to effect “the alteration of the teaching of American History” by funding doctorates “of the right calibre” who were told what was expected of them and who later infiltrated the American Historical Association (Dodd, 1982). By such means was the History profession captured.

Defence Intellectuals

McGeorge Bundy, the Dean of Harvard’s Faculty of Arts and Sciences, claimed in 1955 that “a university which does not try to develop to a maximal degree the interest, cooperation, and understanding between its staff members and those of the National Defense forces is not doing its full job” (cited in Trumpbour, 1991, p. 14).

Thomas Schelling, who is best known for his work on game theory, wrote of a “new academic profession [that] grew in size and influence” in the 1950s, before moving in 1961 “into the Establishment, the Departments of State and Defense” (Schelling, 1979, p.1).

The founder of MIT’s political science department, Ithiel de Sola Pool (1966), called the rising class of academics “the new mandarins,” an allusion to an educated, unelected bureaucratic elite capable of influencing policy and administration.

Scholars who later looked back on that period, however, did not see influence, but rather servitude. According to political scientist Mark Solovey (2001, p. 196), for example, even though “well inside the corridors of power, the scholar entered only as a servant of power, an advisor to those who had real power.”

Reason in the Service of Empire

Harvard historian John Trumpbour (1989, p. 54) wrote that “reason, sometimes of a specialized, technocratic variety,” had been put “at the service of the national security apparatus”; he called it “reason in the service of empire.”

Reason in the service of empire was exemplified by Thomas Schelling’s (2020, pp. 124-130) claim that the United States had exercised “restraint” during the Korean War because it did not bomb anywhere in China or use nuclear weapons.

In reality, as historian Charles Armstrong (2009, p. 1) explains, the US Air Force dropped more bomb tonnage on North Korea (including napalm) than it had dropped on the entire Pacific theatre during World War II, killing a staggering 10-15% of the population. There was no “restraint.”

Defence intellectuals thus provided an intellectually sophisticated form of war propaganda.

Chomsky (1967) described the writings of prominent commentators on US foreign policy (such as Arthur Schlesinger, Walt Rostow, Irving Kristol, Herman Kahn, and Daniel Bell) as characterised by a “growing lack of concern for truth” and “a real or feigned naiveté about American actions that reaches startling proportions.”

The Princeton Consultants

The Princeton Consultants were a secret group of academics and practitioners formed by CIA director Allen Dulles in the late 1950s. They played a central role in helping to prepare the 50 or so annual National Intelligence Estimates. In the view of John Cavanagh (the erstwhile director of the Institute for Policy Studies), their work “could have served as an intelligence base for the series of brutal and often illegal covert operations of the 1950s and 1960s (and possibly also the 1970s) [...]” (Cavanagh, 1980).

Project Camelot

Project Camelot (1964/65) was a Pentagon counter-insurgency project funded through the Special Operations Research Organisation.

Had Camelot been seen through to its conclusion, it would have been the largest social science project in history, involving an estimated \$6 billion being spent on research into precluding communist revolution in some 30 developing countries (Solovey, 2001, p. 171). Many of the leading political scientists in the United States were involved in the project.

Project Camelot thus amounted, in the words of van der Pijl (2014, p. 163), to “customising research itself and turning universities and think tanks into extensions of the American war machine.”

CIA/Ford and the Coup in Indonesia

In 1956, the Ford Foundation began funding fellowships for Indonesian students to undertake advanced study at Berkeley, Yale, and Cornell.

After a military coup backed by the United States and Britain in 1965 inaugurated the Suharto dictatorship, a suite of US-trained economists, including those who had been funded by Ford as well as 170 brought over by the Stanford Research Institute, were installed as Indonesian administrators to work under the indirect rule of the United States (Ransom, 1974, p. 96; cf. Parmar, 2012, p. 258).

The coup, which led to the destruction of the third largest communist party in the world and the massacre of hundreds of thousands of people, had the complicity, in van der Pijl’s (2014, p. 174) view, of “both the US political authorities and the social scientists funded by the big foundations.”

The American Political Science Association (APSA) Scandal

In February 1967, it was revealed that American Political Science Association director Evron Kirkpatrick and treasurer Max Kampelman were the president and vice-president, respectively, for a CIA front organization called Operations and Policy Research, Inc., which

had hundreds of social scientists working covertly to promote books favourable to US foreign policy.

While previously working at the State Department, Kirkpatrick had been involved in what political scientist Ido Oren (2003, pp. 155-6) calls the “orchestration of propaganda disguised as academic scholarship.” Oren notes that Kirkpatrick “put his name and academic credentials on counterpropaganda books that, though published by ostensibly private imprints, were actually penned by State Department researchers.”

Kampelman, in his capacity as APSA treasurer, covertly received CIA funds through conduits such as the Asia Foundation, and he and Kirkpatrick conspired to make sure a substantial lump sum was paid from APSA to Kirkpatrick’s private pension fund (Barrow 2017, p. 461; Oren 2003, p. 157).

CIA Influence On Campus

According to history professor Bruce Cumings (1997, p. 19), “CIA-connected faculty were so influential in the 1960s that they made critics who stood for academic principle look like wild-eyed radicals.”

MIT’s Ithiel de Sola Pool openly called in 1966 for social science to be placed in service of the CIA (1966, pp. 111-114). CIA director Admiral William Raborn, meanwhile, “prided himself on the intense traffic between academe and the agency” (van der Pijl, 2014, p. 167).

Mounting public concern about the covert influence of federal agencies on education, however, led to a congressional committee recommending in March 1967 that “no federal agency shall provide any covert financial assistance or support, direct or indirect, to any of the nation’s educational or private voluntary organizations” (cited in Johnson, 2019, p. 3). A federal law passed later that year prohibited the CIA from funding covert university research (Trumpbour, 1991, p. 14).

Ongoing CIA Sponsorship of Academic Research after 1967

However, as political scientist Loch Johnson (2019, p. 3) records, hundreds of professors at over 100 US colleges and universities anonymously continued researching and writing books and journal articles secretly funded by the CIA.

Even where the CIA ostensibly withdrew funding from certain social science programmes, such as at MIT’s Centre for International Studies, the Ford Foundation picked up the baton (Price, 2016, p. 106).

A confidential memo of August 5, 1968, from University of California vice-president Earl Clinton Bolton to the CIA on the subject of “Agency-Academic Relations” recommended defences for academics accused of CIA connections as well as a “very well considered, affirmative public relations program” for academic CIA work (cited in Cavanagh, 1980). Evidently, university leaders were not to be dissuaded from maintaining ties with the CIA.

In 1976, CIA Director George H.W. Bush claimed that US intelligence depends more “on a community of scholars than on a network of spies” (cited in Trumpbour, 1991, p. 14). The CIA clearly had no intention of loosening its hold on academia either.

“Policy-oriented Intellectuals”

David Rockefeller’s sidekick, Zbigniew Brzezinski, was critical of what he called “the intellectual dissenter, who sees his role largely in terms of proffering social critiques” and instead thought that intellectuals should be “experts and specialists, who become involved in special governmental undertakings, [and] generalist-integrators who become in effect house-ideologues for those in power” (cited in Chomsky, 1969, p. 32).

Their Trilateral Commission colleague, Harvard’s Samuel Huntington, similarly distinguished between “value-oriented” and “policy-oriented” intellectuals,” advocating for the latter (Crozier et al. 1975).

The Ford Foundation, according to Professor Inderjeet Parmar, “wanted to transplant into Chile an ‘American’ model of the policy-oriented social scientist: one who could serve any mainstream political party or administration by providing [supposedly] ‘objective’ advice” (Parmar, 2012, p. 191).

The 1973 CIA coup against the democratically elected president of Chile, Salvador Allende, was named Operation Jakarta after the bloodbath in Indonesia, and it followed a similar model in that it was accompanied by the cultivation of Ford-funded US-trained economists (Parmar, 2017, p. 113-14).

Propaganda Masquerading as Scholarship

The “house-ideologues for those in power” continued their work. For example, Herman and Chomsky ([1979](#), p. 68) observed that

Rarely was the United States portrayed in the mass media or mainstream academic scholarship as engaged in the positive pursuit of its own economic-imperial interests at the expense of any people standing in its way; nor are its exploits described as subversion or outright aggression.

An obvious example of this, they noted, was the tendency to paint China as “expansionist” and the United States as *responding* to Chinese aggression – despite ringing China with military bases, supporting Taiwan, and engaging in the “wholesale destruction” of neighbouring Vietnam.

Chomsky (1982, p. 94) commented on *Foreign Affairs* editor James Chase’s writings on US foreign policy,

In which of these cases was American intervention motivated by concern for human rights and espousal of liberal, pluralistic democracies? It remains a matter of great interest and importance that such utter nonsense can be produced with a straight face and be taken seriously in journalism and academic scholarship.

One is reminded here of Jacques Ellul's 1965 remark concerning Pravda propaganda that it was "taken seriously not only by the authorities but by the intellectuals" (Ellul, 2006, p. 9). Intellectuals in the West were, thus, not so very different from their Soviet counterparts in terms of their susceptibility to propaganda and their willingness to promulgate it.

CIA Influence in the Reagan Era

In 1984, the Reagan administration announced a scheme under which the National Security Council would determine which research best served US government interests (Ege, 1984, p. 43).

The journalist Konrad Ege wrote that "Lucrative Pentagon contracts and a close relationship with the CIA" had already "tied many universities closely to the 'national security apparatus'" and many US professors had "no qualms about doing research for the CIA and the Pentagon" (Ege, 1984, p. 43).

The Student Cooperative Union at the University of California objected that "As long as the university functions as a service agency for the CIA, or as a cover for its 'academic' and propaganda purposes, any claim to the university's role as an open and democratic institution is farce" (cited in Ege, 1984, p. 44).

Harvard and the CIA

In 1985, it emerged that Huntington and his colleague Nadav Safran (director of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies) were ongoing recipients of CIA funding, the latter using that funding for a conference in 1986 without informing the attendees.

The CIA in 1986 funded a study by Huntington and his Harvard colleague Richard K. Betts that appeared in Harvard's *International Security* journal, itself a recipient of "undisclosed Agency funding" (Johnson, 2019, p. 5). Huntington and Betts only admitted the CIA funding a year later.

Ernest May and Richard Neustadt received a \$1.2 million grant from the CIA in 1988, just one of a many large contracts which came to Harvard in the late 1980s, showcasing Harvard President Derek Bok's commitment to conducting what he called 'open' research for the CIA" (Trumpbour, 1991, p. 15).

Harvard and the Military

Between 1977 and 1988, Harvard's Kennedy School of Government saw a more than *tenfold* increase in endowment under Dean Graham Allison as it became "heavily soaked in Department of Defense sponsorship" (Trumpbour, 1991, p. 15).

A "National Security Fellows" programme was initiated at the Kennedy School in 1984 that enrolled senior military leaders from the United States and abroad.

Harvard academics fell over themselves to support US involvement in the Persian Gulf War. They included the Kennedy School's Richard Haass, who was an architect of President

Bush's "no negotiation" approach, two former deans of the Kennedy School (Graham Allison and Joseph Nye), Nadav Safran, and Laurie Mylroie (Trumpbour, 1991, p. 15).

Manufacturing the "Muslim Threat"

Huntington's "clash of civilizations" thesis was first published in the Council on Foreign Relations journal *Foreign Affairs* in 1993. Although conventional state-based threats to the United States largely disappeared in 1989, Huntington argued that new threats would emerge rooted in culture and religion: "Islam" in particular would pose a danger to "the West."

Richard Betts, who co-authored the aforementioned CIA article with Huntington in 1986, and was now the CFR Director of National Security Studies, warned in *Foreign Affairs* that "enemies might attempt to punish the United States by triggering catastrophes in American cities," specifically citing the threat of a "radical Islamic group" (Betts, 1998, pp. 27, 39).

The New Pearl Harbour

Brzezinski (1997, p. 210) argued in 1997 that the "geostrategic imperatives" of "American primacy" meant gaining control of areas formerly belonging to the Soviet Union, in particular oil-rich regions of central Asia.

The problem, he argued, lay in convincing a sceptical US public to accept such a plan, which would prove "difficult [...] except in the circumstance of a truly massive and widely perceived direct external threat" (Brzezinski, 1997, pp. 35-36, 210). There was historical precedent for this, however, namely that US citizens "supported America's engagement in World War II, largely because of the shock effect of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor" (Brzezinski, 1997, p. 25).

In a *Foreign Affairs* article of 1998, Philip Zelikow, Ashton B. Carter, and former CIA director John Deutch (all with links to Harvard or MIT) warned of a "transforming event" that would, "like Pearl Harbour [...] divide our past and future into a before and after" (Carter, Deutch, & Zelikow, 1998, p. 81). "Such an act of catastrophic terrorism," they predicted, could see the introduction of "draconian measures, scaling back civil liberties, allowing wider surveillance of citizens, detention of suspects, and use of deadly force."

The Project for a New American Century (2000, p. 51), which counted the Dean of Johns Hopkins' School of Advanced International Studies, Paul Wolfowitz, among its founding members, claimed that the "rebuilding of America's defences" would be a drawn-out affair "absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event – like a new Pearl Harbour."

Prophecy Fulfilled

When the new Pearl Harbour duly arrived on September 11, 2001, the predictions of the academic intelligence base appeared vindicated: Muslims were blamed for the act of catastrophic terrorism on US soil that was used as the pretext for the so-called "War on Terror."

A few weeks later, anthrax attacks were used to create a climate of fear in which the USA PATRIOT Act could be passed with barely a murmur of opposition (MacQueen, 2014).

The Dark Winter simulation held at Johns Hopkins University three months before “9/11” had imagined an anthrax attack against the United States, [claiming](#) that “Iraq might have provided the technology behind the attacks to terrorist groups based in Afghanistan” (see Hughes, [2026](#)).

It is hard to avoid the impression that the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq were pre-scripted with the help of the academic intelligence base.

Academic Support for the Official “9/11” Narrative

For 25 years, academics have, with very few exceptions, maintained a shameful refusal to examine the scientific evidence regarding the events of “9/11” (Hughes, 2020).

As David Ray Griffin and Peter Dale Scott wrote in 2007,

the discovery that the official narrative about 9/11 [i]s a lie [sh]ould be a discovery of first importance. And yet thus far the mainstream media and most members of the academy have refused to explore the evidence that has been presented for [the] alternative narrative (Griffin & Scott, 2006, p. vii).

That remains true 25 years after the event. As van der Pijl (2014, p. 234) writes, no member of the academic intelligence base “will tolerate let alone initiate serious research into the backgrounds and implications of the War on Terror”; instead, “they subscribe to an obvious hoax.” This is shocking for a profession that is supposed to be about the pursuit of the truth.

Academic Support for the “War on Terror”

The criminologist Willem de Lint (2021, p. 204) notes that in academic discourse, official narratives are “reproduced as if unproblematic.”

Indeed, not only did academics refuse to challenge the official “9/11” narrative, they also provided unconditional support for the so-called “War on Terror” narrative that flowed from it.

For example, 60 hawkish academics published a statement in the *Washington Post* in February 2002 which indulged in talk about “values,” universal human morality, “just war,” etc (Institute for American Values, 2002). By that point, Operation Enduring Freedom had already claimed the lives of tens of thousands of Afghan civilians – merely the start of the United States’ longest ever war.

In the neo-McCarthyite atmosphere created by the “War on Terror,” the Academy became “self-pacifying,” to use the phrase of political theorist Sheldon Wolin (2008, p. 68). Unlike in the 1960s, when opposition to the Vietnam War was so great that politicians and publicists spoke of the need to “pacify the campuses,” universities remained silent regarding the Iraq War.

The reason for this, Wolin (2008, p. 68) argued, was that a “loyal intelligentsia” had been “seamlessly integrated into the system” through “a combination of governmental contracts, corporate and foundation funds, joint projects involving university and corporate researchers, and wealthy individual donors.”

The Militarisation of 21st Century Universities

As Henry Giroux (2009) argues, academia became increasingly militarised after “9/11” (cf. Stavrianakis, 2006; Scripps, 2018).

Already in 2002, some 350 US colleges and universities were engaged in Pentagon-funded research, with the big money going to the sciences and engineering (see Giroux, 2007, p. 53).

DARPA’s Young Faculty Award, begun in 2006, targets “rising stars in junior research positions” and helps them to “develop their research ideas in the context of national security needs” (DARPA, [n.d.](#)).

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq prompted the US Army War College to seek for “operationally relevant social science research” in its model of the “human terrain system” (Sims, [2015](#)). As David Price (2016) has argued, Anthropology was weaponised in this way.

Professor Emerita Joan Roelofs ([2021](#)) notes that US higher education institutes receive “enormous DoD research contracts” and funding from weapons corporations, and that many of their trustees and executives have military connections. They maintain tight collaboration with military institutes such as the Naval War College, they run Reserve Officer Training Corps programmes, and they serve to normalise militarism while traditional liberal arts departments are marginalised or shut down.

Academia and the World Economic Forum

The World Economic Forum established a Global University Leaders Forum in 2006, which it describes as “an invitation only community of global, forward-thinking, and solution-oriented university leaders who are committed to supporting the Forum’s mission of improving the state of the world” (WEF, [n.d.](#)).

Two of those university leaders, Mark Dodgson (Queensland) and Oxford pro-Vice Chancellor David Gann (Dodgson & Gann, [2020](#)), wrote for the WEF in 2020 that “universities must redouble their efforts to work alongside corporations, governments and NGOs as they search for new business models and policies to assist ‘the Great Reset.’”

Who knew that the role of universities was to support a global public private partnership rather than to advance learning and critical thinking?

Conclusion

Lyndon LaRouche, writing under a pen name, observed in 1974 that

Through control of governmental and major foundations, as well as corporate and wealthy-individual funding, it has been no great matter to control not only what programs are funded, but to control the selection of instructors who move into controlling positions [...]. (Marcus, [1974](#), pp. 8-9)

Anthony C. Sutton wrote in 1976 that

Through foundations controlled by this elite, research by compliant and spineless academics, 'conservatives' as well as 'liberals,' has been directed into channels useful for the objectives of the elite essentially to maintain this subversive and unconstitutional power apparatus. (Sutton, 2016, p. 173)

Half a century later, little has changed. Academic knowledge production is heavily determined by the power structure in which it is embedded.

The anthropologist David Price observes that

The conflux of the rise of tax-exempt foundations named after dead millionaires and [academics] seeking research funds provided new life to Marx's observation that "the more a dominant class is able to absorb the best people from the dominated class, the more solid and dangerous is its rule. (Price, 2016, p. 105)

The fact that the ruling class has been able to co-opt the brightest minds means that there is no intelligentsia willing and able to speak truth to power.

Marx (1843) called for "*ruthless criticism* of all that exists, ruthless both in the sense of not being afraid of the results it arrives at and in the sense of being just as little afraid of conflict with the powers that be."

Academia today represents the opposite. Notwithstanding empty rhetoric about "academic freedom," it has fallen so far under the control of the powers that be that it is afraid to challenge official narratives.

International Relations scholar Muriel Cozette points out an obvious logic:

Power must hide under the guises of morality in order to be effective, and for its actions to appear legitimate. In this task, power is likely to court scholars because of their role as the guardians of truth. Power will do its best to corrupt scholars and to lead them to justify power politics [...] (Cozette, 2008, p. 21)

That is essentially what has happened. Academia has become so corrupted that power prevails over truth.

There is a deep moral aspect to all of this. As Chomsky wrote in 1967,

Intellectuals are in a position to expose the lies of governments [...] For a privileged minority, Western democracy provides the leisure, the facilities, and the training to seek the truth lying hidden behind the veil of distortion and misrepresentation,

ideology and class interest, through which the events of current history are presented to us. The responsibilities of intellectuals, then, are much deeper than [for ordinary people], given the unique privileges that intellectuals enjoy. (Chomsky, [1967](#))

When intellectuals fail to expose the lies of governments and instead produce work that serves to rationalise power in various ways, they fail in their civic duty. “The subversion of scholarship poses a threat to society at large,” Chomsky ([1969](#)) wrote, and “a strong argument can be made that the university has, to a significant degree, betrayed its public trust.”

If that was true in the late 1960s, how much worse is the problem today? Through a quarter of a century of silence regarding the events of “9/11,” academia has served to legitimise the Big Lie from which all the horrors of the “War on Terror” have flowed.

Academia’s complicity in the atrocities of the Covid era is a topic all of its own and would warrant a separate presentation to do it justice.

Today, universities are helping to develop technologies used for predictive policing, automated warfare, mass surveillance, and forms of digital authoritarianism, using the language of national security to justify their actions. Such technologies serve, in the words of Henry Giroux (2026), to “deepen inequality, expand state violence, erode civil liberties, and facilitate the killing of civilians, including children.”

In the final analysis, the mercenary embeddedness of academia in matters of “national security” means that it is not fundamentally acting for the good of society or in the interests of truth.