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War on Terror
The Militarising of Public Space and Culture in the United States

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The process of militarisation has a long history in the United States and is varied rather than static, changing under different historical conditions. Catherine Lutz defines it as 'an intensification of the labor and resources allocated to military purposes, including the shaping of other institutions in synchrony with military goals. Militarization is simultaneously a discursive process, involving a shift in general societal beliefs and values in ways necessary to legitimate the use of force, the organization of large standing armies and their leaders, and the higher taxes or tribute used to pay for them. Militarization is intimately connected not only to the obvious increase in the size of armies and resurgence of militant nationalisms and militant fundamentalisms but also to the less visible deformation of human potentials into the hierarchies of race, class, gender, and sexuality, and to the shaping of national histories in ways that glorify and legitimate military action.'[1] Unlike the old style of militarisation in which civil authority is made subordinate to military authority, the new ethos of militarisation is organised to engulf the entire social order, legitimising its values as a central rather than peripheral aspect of American public life. Moreover, the values of militarism no longer reside in a single group, nor are they limited to a particular sphere of society, as Jorge Mariscal points out:

> In liberal democracies, in particular, the values of militarism do not reside in a single group but are diffused across a wide variety of cultural locations. In twenty-first century America, no one is exempt from militaristic values because the processes of militarisation allow those values to permeate the fabric of everyday life.[2]

Following September 11, American power is being restructured domestically around a growing culture of fear and a rapidly increasing militarisation of public space and culture. As US military action is spreading abroad under the guise of an unlimited war against terrorism, public spaces on the domestic front are increasingly being organised

1. Catherine Lutz, 'Making war at home in the United States: Militarization and the current crisis', *American Anthropologist* 104: 723.

2. Jorge Mariscal, ' "Lethal and Compassionate": The Militarization of US Culture', *CounterPunch*, 5 May 2003 [available at: http://www.counterpunch.org/mariscal05052003.html].

around values supporting a highly militarised, patriarchal, and jingoistic culture that is undermining 'centuries of democratic gains'.[3]

The growing influence of the military presence and ideology in American society is visible, in part, in that the United States has more police, prisons, spies, weapons, and soldiers than at any time in its history. This radical shift in the size, scope, and influence of the military can be seen, on the one hand, in the redistribution in domestic resources and government funding away from social programmes into military oriented security measures at home and war abroad.

> The US Government is devoting huge resources to the monopolistic militarisation of space, the development of more usable nuclear weapons, and the strengthening of its world-girdling ring of military bases and its global navy, as the most tangible way to discourage any strategic challenges to its preeminence.[4]

According to journalist George Monbiot, the US federal government 'is now spending as much on war as it is on education, public health, housing, employment, pensions, food aid and welfare put together'.[5] On the other hand, the state is being radically transformed into a national security state, increasingly put under the sway of the military–corporate–industrial–educational complex. In addition, the military logic of fear, surveillance, and control is gradually permeating our public schools, universities, streets, popular culture, and criminal justice system.

As the military becomes dominant in American life, its underlying values, social relations, ideology, and hyper-masculine aesthetic begin to spread out into other aspects of American culture. Citizens are recruited as foot soldiers in the war on terrorism, urged to spy on their neighbours' behaviours, watch for suspicious-looking people, and supply data to government sources in the war on terrorism. As permanent war becomes a staple of everyday life, flags increasingly appear on storefront windows, lapels, cars, houses, SUVs, and everywhere else as a show of support for both the expanding interests of empire abroad and the increasing militarisation of the culture and social order at home. Major universities more intensively court the military establishment for Defence Department grants and, in doing so, become less open to either academic subjects or programmes that encourage rigorous debate, dialogue, and critical thinking. Public schools not only have more military recruiters, they also have more military personnel teaching in the classrooms. JROTC programmes are increasingly becoming a conventional part of the school day. As a result of the No Child Left Behind Act, President Bush's educational law, 'schools risk losing all federal aid if they fail to provide military recruiters full access to their students; the aid is contingent with complying with federal law'.[6] Schools were once viewed as democratic public spheres that would teach students how to resist the militarisation of democratic life, or at least learn the skills to peacefully engage domestic and international problems. Now they serve as recruiting stations for students to fight enemies at home and abroad.

Military activities abroad cannot be separated from the increasing militarisation of society at home. War takes on a new meaning in

3. Susan Buck-Morss, *Thinking Past Terror: Islamism and Critical Theory on the Left*, Verso, New York and London, 2003, p 33.

4. Richard Falk, 'Will the Empire be Fascist?' [available at: http://www.transnational.org/forum/meet/2003/Falk_FascistEmpire.html].

5. George Monbiot, 'States of War', *Guardian*, UK, 14 October 2003 [available at: http://www.commondreams.org/views03/1014–09.htm].

6. David Goodman, 'Covertly Recruiting Kids', *Baltimore Sun*, 29 September 2003 [available at: http://www.commondreams.org/views03/1001–11.htm].

American life as wars are waged on drugs, social policies are criminalised, youth are tried as adults, incarceration rates soar among the poor, especially people of colour, and schools are increasingly modelled after prisons. Schools represent one of the most serious public spheres to come under the influence of military culture and values. Tough love now translates into zero-tolerance policies that turn public schools into prison-like institutions, as students' rights increasingly diminish under the onslaught of a military-like imposed discipline. Additionally, as educators turn over their responsibility for school safety to the police, the new security culture in public schools has turned them into 'learning prisons',[7] most evident in the ways in which schools are being 'reformed' with the addition of armed guards, barbed-wired security fences, and lock-down drills. Recently, in Goose Creek, South Carolina, police conducted an early morning drug sweep at Stratford High School. When the police arrived they drew guns on students, handcuffed them, and made them kneel facing the wall.[8] No drugs were found in the raid. Though this incident was aired on the national news, there was barely any protest from the public.

The rampant combination of fear and insecurity that is so much a part of a permanent war culture in the United States seems to bear down particularly hard on children. In many poor districts, specialists are being laid off and crucial mental health services are being cut back. As Sara Rimer recently pointed out in the *New York Times*, much needed student-based services and traditional, if not compassionate, ways of dealing with student problems are now being replaced by the juvenile justice system, which functions 'as a dumping ground for poor minority kids with mental health and special-education problems. . . . The juvenile detention center has become an extension of the principal's office.'[9] For example, in some cities, ordinances have been passed that 'allow for the filing of misdemeanour charges against students for anything from disrupting a class to assaulting a teacher'.[10] Children are no longer given a second chance for minor behaviour infractions, nor are they simply sent to the guidance counsellor, principal, or to detention. They now come under the jurisdiction of the courts and juvenile justice system.

The militarisation of public high schools has become so commonplace that, even in the face of the most flagrant disregard for children's rights, such acts are justified by both administrators and the public on the grounds that they keep kids safe. In Biloxi, Mississippi surveillance cameras have been installed in all of its five hundred classrooms. The school's administrators call this 'school reform' but none of them has asked the question about what they are teaching kids who are put under constant surveillance. The not-so-hidden curriculum here is that kids cannot be trusted and that their rights are not worth protecting. At the same time, they are being educated to passively accept military sanctioned practices organised around maintaining control, surveillance, and unquestioned authority, all conditions central to a police state. It gets worse. Some schools are actually using sting operations in which undercover agents who pretend to be students are used to catch young people suspected of selling drugs or committing any one of a number of school infractions. The consequences of such actions are far reaching, as Randall Beger notes:

7. Gail R Chaddock, 'Safe Schools at a Price', *Christian Science Monitor*, 25 August 1999, p 15.

8. Tamar Lewin, 'Raid at High School Leads to Racial Divide, Not Drugs', *New York Times*, 9 December 2003, p A16.

9. Sandra Rimer, 'Unruly Students Facing Arrest, Not Detention', *New York Times*, 2 January 2004, p 15.

10. Ibid, p 15.

11. Randall Beger, 'Expansion of Police Power in the Public Schools and the Vanishing Rights of Students', *Social Justice*, 29:1–2, 2002, p 124.

12. Peter B Kraska, 'The Military–Criminal Justice Blur: An Introduction', in *Militarizing the American Criminal Justice System*, ed Peter B Kraska, Northeastern University Press, Boston, 2001, p 3.

13. See especially, Christian Parenti, *Lockdown America: Police and Prisons in the Age of Crisis*, Verso, London, 1999.

14. Kraska, 'The Military–Criminal Justice Blur: An Introduction', op cit, p 10.

15. Jonathan Simon, 'Sacrificing Private Ryan: The Military Model and the New Penology', in Peter B Kraska, ed, op cit, p 113.

16. These figures are taken from the following sources: Gary Delgado, ' "Mo" Prisons Equals MO' Money', *Colorlines*, Winter 1999–2000, p 18; Fox Butterfield, 'Number in Prison Grows Despite Crime Reduction', *New York Times*, 10 August 2000, p A10; Anthony Lewis, 'Punishing the Country', *New York Times*, 2 December 1999, p A1.

17. Sanho Tree, 'The War at Home,' *Sojourner's* Magazine, May–June 2003, p 5.

18. For some extensive analyses of the devastating affects the criminal justice system is having on black males, see Michael Tonry, *Malign Neglect: Race, Crime, and Punishment in America*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1995; Jerome Miller, *Search and Destroy: African-American Males in the Criminal Justice System*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1996; David Cole, *No Equal Justice:*

Opponents of school-based sting operations say they not only create a climate of mistrust between students and police, but they also put innocent students at risk of wrongful arrest due to faulty tips and overzealous police work. When asked about his role in a recent undercover probe at a high school near Atlanta, a young-looking police officer who attended classes and went to parties with students replied: 'I knew I had to fit in, make kids trust me and then turn around and take them to jail.[11]

Instances of militarisation and the war at home can also be seen in the rise of the prison–industrial–educational complex and the militarisation of the criminal justice system. The traditional 'distinctions between military, police, and criminal justice are blurring'.[12] The police now work in close collaboration with the military. This takes the form of receiving surplus weapons, technology/information transfers, the introduction of SWAT teams modelled after the Navy Seals – which are experiencing a steep growth in police departments throughout the US – and a growing reliance on military models of crime control.[13] This growth of the military model in American life has played a crucial role in the paramilitarising of the culture, which provides both a narrative and legitimisation 'for recent trends in corrections, including the normal-isation of special response teams, the increasingly popular Supermax prisons, and drug war boot camps'.[14] In the paramilitaristic perspective, crime is no longer seen as a social problem, but now as both an individual pathology and a matter of punishment rather than rehabilitation. Unsurprisingly, paramilitary culture increasingly embodies a racist and class-specific discourse and 'reflects the discrediting of the social and its related narratives'.[15] This is particularly evident as America's inner cities are being singled out as dangerous enclaves of crime and violence. The consequences for those communities have been catastrophic, as can be seen in the cataclysmic rise of the prison–industrial complex. As is widely reported, the United States is now the biggest jailer in the world. Between 1985 and 2002 the prison population grew from 744,206 to 2.1 million (approaching the combined populations of Idaho, Wyoming, and Montana), and prison budgets jumped from US$7 billion in 1980 to US$40 billion in 2000.[16] As Sanho Tree points out:

> With more than 2 million people behind bars (there are only 8 million prisoners in the entire world), the United States – with one-twenty-second of the world's population – has one-quarter of the planet's prisoners. We operate the largest penal system in the world, and approximately one quarter of all our prisoners (nearly half a million people) are there for nonviolent drug offenses.[17]

Yet, even as the crime rate plummets dramatically, more people, especially people of colour, are being arrested, harassed, punished, and put in jail.[18] Of the two million people behind bars, 70% of the inmates are people of colour: 50% are African-American and 17% are Latino.[19] A Justice Department Report declares that on any given day in the United States 'more than a third of the young African-American men aged eighteen to thirty-four in some of our major cities are either in prison or under some form of criminal justice supervision'.[20] The same department reported in April of 2000 that 'black youth are forty-eight times more

Race and Class in the American Criminal Justice System, New Press, New York, 1999; Michael Parenti, *Lockdown America: Police and Prisons in the Age of Crisis*, op cit; Marc Mauer, *Race to Incarcerate*, New Press, New York,1999; Marc Mauer and Meda Chesney-Lind, *Invisible Punishment: The Collateral Consequences of Mass Imprisonment*, New Press, New York, 2002.

19. Cited in David Barsamian, 'Interview with Angela Davis', *The Progressive*, February 2001, p 35.

20. Steven Donziger, *The Real War on Crime: The Report of the National Criminal Justice Commission*, Harper Perennial, New York, 1996, p 101.

21. Lisa Featherstone, 'A Common Enemy: Students Fight Private Prisons', *Dissent*, Fall 2000, p 78.

22. Carl Chery, 'U.S. Army Targets Back Hip-Hop Fans', *The Wire/Daily Hip-Hop News*, 21 October 2003 [available at: http:// www.sohh.com/ article_print.php?content_ ID = 5162].

23. Ibid.

24. David Garland cited in Melange, 'Men and Jewelry: Prison as Exile; Unifying Laughter and Darkness', *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 6 July 2001, p B4.

likely than whites to be sentenced to juvenile prison for drug offenses'.[21] When poor youth of colour are not being warehoused in dilapidated schools or incarcerated, they are being aggressively recruited by the Army to fight the war abroad. For example, Carl Chery recently reported:

> With help from *The Source* magazine, the U.S. military is targeting hip-hop fans with custom made Hummers, throwback jerseys and trucker hats. The yellow Hummer, spray-painted with two black men in military uniform, is the vehicle of choice for the U.S. Army's 'Take It to the Streets campaign' – a sponsored mission aimed at recruiting young African Americans into the military ranks.[22]

It seems that the Army has discovered hip-hop and urban culture but, rather than listening to the searing indictments of poverty, joblessness, and despair that is one of that culture's central messages, the Army recruiters appeal to its most commodified elements by letting the 'potential recruits hang out in the Hummer, where they can pep the sound system or watch recruitment videos'.[23] Of course, they won't view any videos of Hummers being blown up in the war-torn streets of Baghdad.

Under the auspices of the national security state and the militarisation of domestic life, containment policies become the principle means to discipline working-class youth and restrict their ability to think critically and engage in oppositional practices. Marginalised students learn quickly that they are surplus populations and that the journey from home to school no longer means they will next move into a job; on the contrary, school now becomes a training ground for their 'graduation' into the containment centres of prisons that keep them out of sight, patrolled and monitored so as to prevent them from becoming a social canker or political liability to those white and middle-class populations concerned about their own safety. Schools increasingly function as zoning mechanisms to separate students marginalised by class and colour and as such these institutions are now modelled after prisons. This follows the argument of David Garland, who points out that:

> Large-scale incarceration functions as a mode of economic and social placement, a zoning mechanism that segregates those populations rejected by the depleted institutions of family, work, and welfare and places them behind the scenes of social life.[24]

And judging from President Bush's 2004 State of the Union Address, his administration will continue to allocate funds for 'educational reform' intended to both strip young people of the capacity to think critically by teaching them that learning is largely about test-taking and prepare them for a culture in which punishment has become the central principle of reform. Bush cannot fully fund his own educational reform act but he pledged in his Address an additional US$23 million to promote drug testing of students in public schools. Once again, fear, punishment, and containment override the need to provide health care for 9.3 million uninsured children, increase the ranks of new teachers by at least 100,000, fully support Head Start programmes, repair deteriorating schools, and improve those youth services that will break for many poor students the direct pipeline from school to either the local police station, the courts, or prison.

Militarisation is widespread in the realm of culture and functions as a mode of public pedagogy, instilling the values and the aesthetic of militarisation through a wide variety of pedagogical sites and cultural venues. For instance, Humvee ads offer up the fantasy of military glamour and modes of masculinity, marketed to suggest that ownership of these military-designed vehicles first used in Operation Desert Storm guarantees virility for its owners and promotes a mixture of fear and admiration from everyone else. One of the fastest growing sports for middle-class suburban youth is the game of paintball 'in which teenagers stalk and shoot each other on "battlefields" (in San Diego, paintball participants pay an additional fifty dollars to hone their skills at the Camp Pendleton Marine Base)'.[25] Military recruitment ads flood all modes of entertainment, using sophisticated marketing tools that offered messages with a strong appeal to the hyper-masculinity of young men. Such ads resonate powerfully and serve directly as an enticement for recruitment. For example, the website www.marines.com opens with the sound of gunfire and then provides the following message:

> We are the warriors, one and all. Born to defend, built to conquer. The steel we wear is the steel within ourselves, forged by the hot fires of discipline and training. We are fierce in a way no other can be. We are the marines.

From video games to Hollywood films and children's toys, popular culture is increasingly bombarded with militarised values, symbols, and images. Video games such as *Doom* have a long history of using violent graphics and shooting techniques that appeal to the most hyper-modes of masculinity. The Marine Corps was so taken with *Doom* in the mid–1990s that it produced its own version of the game, *Marine Doom*, and made it available to download free. One of the developers of the game, Lieutenant Scott Barnett, claimed at the time that it was a useful game to keep marines entertained. The interface of military and popular culture is not only valuable in providing video game technology for diverse military uses, it has also resulted in the armed forces developing partnerships 'with the video game industry to train and recruit soldiers'.[26] The military uses the games to train recruits and the video game makers offer products that have the imprimatur of a first-class fighting machine. And the popularity of militarised war games is on the rise. Nick Turse argues that as the line between entertainment and war disappears a:

25. Jorge Marsical, op cit.

26. Matt Slagle, 'Military Recruits Video-Game Makers', *Chicago Tribune*, 8 October 2003, p 4.

27. Nick Turse, 'The Pentagon Invades Your Xbox', *Dissident Voice*, 15 December 2003 [available at: http://www.dissidentvoice.org/Articles9/Turse_Pentagon-Video-Games.htm].

> . . . military-entertainment complex [has] sprung up to feed both the military's desire to bring out ever-more-realistic computer and video combat games. Through video games, the military and its partners in academia and the entertainment industry are creating an arm of media culture geared toward preparing young Americans for armed conflict.[27]

Combat teaching games offer a perfect fit between the Pentagon, with its accelerating military budget, and the entertainment industry, with annual revenues of US$479 billion, which includes US$40 billion from the video game industry. The entertainment industry offers a stamp of approval for the Pentagon's war games and the Defence Department provides an aura of authenticity for corporate America's war-based products. While

collaboration between the Defense Department and the entertainment industry has been going on since 1997, the permanent war culture that now grips the United States has given this partnership a new life and greatly expanded its presence in popular culture.

The military has found numerous ways to take advantage of the intersection between popular culture and the new electronic technologies. Such technologies are not only being used to train military personnel, they are also being put to use as a recruiting tool, tapping into the realm of popular culture with its celebration of video games, computer technology, the Internet, and other elements of visual culture used by teenagers.[28] For instance, the army has developed online software that appeals to computer-literate recruits, and the most attractive feature of the software is a shooting game 'that actually simulates battle and strategic-warfare situations'.[29] When asked about the violence the games portray, Brian Ball, the lead developer of the game, was crystal clear about the purpose of the video. 'We don't downplay the fact that the Army manages violence. We hope that this will help people understand the role of the military in American life.'[30] Capitalising on its link with industry, a host of new war games are in production. There is *America's Army*, one of the most popular and successful recruiting video games. This game teaches young people how 'to kill enemy soldiers while wearing your pyjamas [and also provides] plenty of suggestions about visiting your local recruiter and joining the real US Army'.[31] Using the most updated versions of satellite technology, military-industry collaboration has produced *Kuma: War*. This game was developed by the Department of Defence and Kuma Reality Games, and slated for release in 2004. It is a subscription-based product that 'prepares gamers for actual missions based on real-world conflicts', and is updated weekly.[32] The game allows players to re-create actual news stories such as the raid American forces conducted in Mosul, Iraq in which Saddam Hussein's two sons, Uday and Qusay, were killed. Gamers can take advantage of real 'true to life satellite imagery and authentic military intelligence, to jump from the headlines right into the frontlines of international conflict'.[33] Of course, the realities of carrying eighty-pound knapsacks in one hundred and twenty degree heat, the panic-inducing anxiety and fear of real people shooting real bullets or planting real bombs to kill or maim you and your fellow soldiers, and the months, if not years away from family are not among those experiences reproduced for instruction or entertainment. Young people no longer learn military values in training-camp or in military-oriented schools. These values are now disseminated through the pedagogical force of popular culture itself, which has become a major tool used by the armed forces to educate young people about the ideology and social relations that inform military life – minus a few of the unpleasantries. The collaboration between the military-entertainment complex offers up a form of public pedagogy that:

> . . . may help to produce great battlefield decision makers, but . . . strike from debate the most crucial decisions young people can make in regard to the morality of a war – choosing whether or not to fight and for what cause.[34]

28. For a list of such 'toys', see Nicholas Turse, 'Have Yourself a Pentagon Xmas', *The Nation*, 5 January 2004, p 8 [for a more extensive list, visit http://www.tomdispatch.com].

29. R Lee Sullivan, 'Firefight on Floppy Disk', *Forbes Magazine*, 20 May 1996, pp 39–40.

30. Gloria Goodale, 'Video Game Offers Young Recruits a Peek at Military Life', *Christian Science Monitor*, 31 May 2003, p 18.

31. Wayne Woolley, 'From "An Army of One" to Army of Fun: Online Video Game Helps Build Ranks', *Times-Picayune*, 7 September 2003, p 26.

32. This description comes from *Gaming News*, October 2003 [available at: http://www.gamerstemple.com/news/1003/100331.asp].

33. This quote comes from *Gaming News*, October 2003 [available at: http://www.gamerstemple.com/news/1003/100331.asp].

34. Nick Turse, 'The Pentagon Invades Your Xbox', *Dissident Voice*, 15 December 2003 [see http://www.dissidentvoice.org/Articles9/Turse_Pentagon-Video-Games.htm].

In light of the militaristic transformation of the country, attitudes toward war play have changed dramatically and can be observed in the major increase in the sales, marketing, and consumption of military toys, games, videos, and clothing. Corporations recognise that there are big profits to be made at a time when military symbolism gets a boost from the war in Iraq and the upsurge in patriotic jingoism. The popularity of militarised culture is apparent not only in the sales of video combat games but also in the sales of children's toys. Major retailers and major chain stores across the country are selling out of war-related toys. KB Toys stores in San Antonio, Texas, sold out in one day an entire shipment of a fatigue-clad plush hamsters that dance to military music, and managers at KB Toys stores were instructed 'to feature military toys in the front of their stores'.[35] Moreover, sales of action figures have soared. For example, 'between 2001 and 2002, sales of *GI Joe* increased by forty-six percent', Hasbro reported. And when toy retailer Small Blue Planet launched a series of figures called 'Special Forces: Showdown with Iraq', two of the four models sold out immediately.[36] KB Toys took advantage of the infatuation with action toys related to the war in Iraq by marketing a doll that is a pint-sized model of George W Bush dressed in the US pilot regalia he wore when he landed on the USS Abraham Lincoln on May 1, 2003. Japanese electronic giant SONY attempted to cash in on the war in Iraq by patenting the term 'Shock and Awe' for use with video and computer games. The phrase was used by Pentagon strategists as part of a scare tactic to be used against Iraq. It referred to the massive air bombardment planned for Baghdad in the initial stages of the war. The *New York Times* reported that after September 11, 2001, 'nearly two-dozen applications were filed for the phrase, "Let's Roll" '. The term was made famous by one of the passengers on the ill-fated abducted plane that crashed in a field in Pennsylvania.

Even in the world of fashion, the ever-spreading chic of militarisation and patriotism is making its mark. Army–Navy stores are doing a brisk business not only selling American flags, gas masks, aviator sun glasses, night-vision goggles, and other military equipment but also clothing with the camouflage look.[37] Even chic designers are getting into the act. For instance, at a recent fashion show in Milan, Italy, many designers were 'drawn to GI uniforms [and were] fascinated by the construction of military uniforms'. One designer 'had beefy models in commando gear scramble over tabletops and explode balloons'.[38]

Militarism in both its old and new forms views life as a form of permanent warfare, and in doing so subordinates society to the military rather than subordinating the military to the needs of a democratic social order. It diminishes both the legitimate reasons for a military presence in society and the necessary struggle for the promise of democracy itself. As Umberto Eco points out, under the rubric of its aggressive militarism, 'there is no struggle for life but, rather, life is lived for struggle'.[39] The ideology of militarism is central to any understanding of its appeals to a form of irrationality that is at odds with any viable notion of democracy. For instance, it uses fear to drive human behaviour, and the values it promotes are mainly distrust, patriarchy, and intolerance. Within this ideology, masculinity is associated with violence, and action is often substituted for the democratic processes of deliberation and debate. Militarism as an ideology is about the rule of force and the expansion of

35. Maureen Tkacik, 'Military toys Spark Conflict on Home Front', *Wall Street Journal*, 31 March 2003, p B1.

36. Amy C Sims, 'Just Child's Play', Fox News Channel, 21 August 2003 [available at: http://www.wmsa.net/news./Fox News/fn–030822_childs_play.htm].

37. Mike Conklin, 'Selling War at Retail', *Chicago Tribune*, 1 May 2003), p 1.

38. Both quotes are from Cathy Horyn, 'Macho America Storms Europe's Runways', *New York Times*, 3 July 2003, p A1.

39. Umberto Eco, 'Eternal Fascism: Fourteen Ways of Looking at a Blackshirt', *New York Review of Books*, November–December 1995, p 13.

repressive state power. Democracy appears as an excess in this logic and is often condemned as being a weak system of government. Echoes of this anti-democratic sentiment can be found in the passage of the PATRIOT Act with its violation of civil liberties, in the rancorous patriotism that equates dissent with treason, and in the discourse of public commentators who in the fervour of a militarised culture fan the flames of hatred and intolerance. One example that has become all too typical emerged after the September 11 attacks. Columnist Ann Coulter, in calling for a holy war on Muslims, wrote:

> We should invade their countries, kill their leaders and convert them to Christianity. We weren't punctilious about locating and punishing only Hitler and his top officers. We carpet-bombed German cities; we killed civilians. That's war. And this is war.[40]

While this statement does not reflect the mainstream of American opinion, the uncritical and chauvinistic patriotism and intolerance that informs it has not only become standard fare among many conservative radio hosts in the United States but increasingly is produced and legitimised in a wide number of cultural venues. As militarisation spreads through the culture, it produces policies that rely more on force than on dialogue and compassion; it offers up modes of identification that undermine democratic values and tarnish civil liberties; and it makes the production of both symbolic and material violence a central feature of everyday life. As Kevin Baker remarks, we are quickly becoming a nation that 'substitutes military solutions for almost everything, including international alliances, diplomacy, effective intelligence agencies, democratic institutions – even national security'.[41] By blurring the lines between military and civilian functions, militarisation deforms our language, debases democratic values, celebrates fascist modes of control, defines citizens as soldiers, and diminishes our ability as a nation to uphold international law and support a democratic global public sphere. Unless it is systemically exposed and resisted at every place where it appears in the culture, militarisation will undermine the meaning of critical citizenship and do great harm to those institutions that are central to a democratic society.

The demise of democracy fuelled by the spread of militarisation is also revealed in a policy of anti-terrorism practiced by the Bush administration that mimics the very terrorism it wishes to eliminate. Not only does this policy of all-embracing anti-terrorism exhaust itself in a discourse of moral absolutes, militarism, revenge, and public acts of denunciation, it also strips community of democratic values by configuring politics in religious terms and defining every citizen and inhabitant of the United States as a potential terrorist. Politics becomes empty as it reduces citizens to obedient recipients of power, content to follow orders, while shaming those who make power accountable. Under the dictates of a pseudo-patriotism, dissent is stifled in the face of a growing racism that condems Arabs and people of colour as less than civilized. The recent refusal of the American government to address with any degree of self-criticism or humanity the torture and violation of human rights exercised by American soldiers at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq offers a case in point. In light of the relevation of the most grotesque brutality, racisim, and inhumanity exhibited by American soldiers against Arab prisoners

40. This quote by Coulter has been cited extensively. [It can be found online at: http://www.coulterwatch.com/files/BW_2–003-bin_Coulter.pdf].

41. Kevin Baker, 'We're in the Army Now: The G.O.P.'s Plan to Militarize Our Culture', *Harper's Magazine*, October 2003, p 38.

captured on camera and video, powerful right-wing politicians and pundits such as Rush Limbaugh and Cal Thomas defend such actions as either a way for young men to 'blow some steam off', engage in a form of harmless frat hazing, or give Muslim prisoners what they deserve. It gets worse. Commentators such as Newt Gingrich and Republican Senator James Inhofe have gone so far as to suggest that calling attention to such crimes not only undermines troop morale in Iraq, but is also unpatriotic. Defending torture and gross sexual humiliations by US troops in Saddam's old jails is not merely insensitive political posturing, it is, more tellingly, indicative of how far the leadership of this country has strayed from any real semblance of democracy.

As militarisation spreads its influence both at home and abroad, a culture of fear is mobilised in order to put into place a massive police state intent on controlling and manipulating public speech while making each individual a terrorist suspect subject to surveillance, fingerprinting, and other forms of 'electronic tattooing'. But the increasing danger of militarisation is also evident in the attempt by the corporate/military/media complex to create those ideological and pedagogical conditions in which people either become convinced that the power of the commanding institutions of the state should no longer held accountable or believe that they are powerless to challenge the new reign of state terrorism. And as militarisation spreads its values and power throughout American society and the globe, it works to eliminate those public spaces necessary for imagining an inclusive democratic global society. Militarisation and the culture of fear that legitimises it have redefined the very nature of the political, and in so doing have devalued speech and agency as central categories of democratic public life. And it is precisely as a particular ideology and cultural politics that militarisation has to be opposed.

As the forces of militarisation are ratcheted up within multiple spaces in the body politic, they increasingly begin to produce the political currency of what begins to look like proto-fascism in the United States. To expose and resist such an ideology should be one of the primary responsibilities of intellectuals, activists, parents, youth, community members, and others concerned about the fate of democracy on a global scale. Working both within and outside traditional public spheres, artists, community activists, writers, and educators can expose the ideology of militarisation in all its diversity and how it risks turning the United States into a military state while at the same time undermining crucial social programmes, constitutional liberties, and valuable public spaces. According to Arundhati Roy, this new politics of resistance demands:

> Fighting to win back the minds and hearts of people. . . . It means keeping an eagle eye on public institutions and demanding accountability. It means putting your ear to the ground and listening to the whispering of the truly powerless. It means giving a forum to the myriad voices from the hundreds of resistance movements across the country which are speaking about *real* things – about bonded labor, marital rape, sexual preferences, women's wages, uranium dumping, unsustainable mining, weavers' woes, farmers' suicides. It means fighting displacement and dispossession and the relentless, everyday violence of abject poverty. Fighting it also means not allowing your newspaper columns and prime-time TV spots to be hijacked by their spurious passions and their staged theatrics, which are designed to divert attention from everything else.[42]

42. Arundhati Roy, *War Talk*, South End Press, Cambridge, MA, 2003, pp 37–38.

Progressives everywhere have to reinvent the possibility of an engaged politics and real strategies of resistance. This suggests not only working through traditional spheres of political contestation, such as elections or union struggles or various means of education. Collective struggle must combine the tasks of a radical public pedagogy with massive acts of non-violent, collective disobedience. Such acts can serve to educate, mobilise, and remind people of the importance of struggles that change both ideas and relations of power. By making militarisation visible through the force of words and peaceful resistance, politics can become both meaningful and possible as a contested site through which people can challenge both locally and through international alliances the obscene accumulation of power symptomatic of the increasing militarisation of public space that is spreading both throughout the US and across the globe. Arundhati Roy is right in her incessant and courageous call to globalise dissent but if dissent is to work it must have a focus that cuts across empires, nation states, and local spaces, to the heart of a clear and present danger posed to democracy and social justice. Challenging militarisation in all of its expressions is a direct strike at the heart of a policy that has exceeded democracy and now formed a dreadful pact with a creeping and dangerous authoritarianism. We find ourselves in the midst of a war globally, not simply a war against terrorism but also a war against democratic solidarity in which a democratic future both at home and abroad stands in the balance.