

Kelly Moore. *Disrupting Science: Social Movements, American Scientists, and the Politics of the Military, 1945-1975.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008. x + 311 pp. \$35.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-691-11352-4.



Reviewed by William J. Astore

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This well-researched book examines U.S. scientists' engagement with military agendas and patronage during the Cold War. Kelly Moore looks at three different organizations, showcasing three differing strategies for resisting the militarization of science. Her first case study is of the Society for Social Responsibility in Science, or SSRS. Founded by Victor Paschkis, a Quaker, in 1949, the SSRS stressed the individual responsibility of scientists to consider the moral dimensions of their work. Adopting a broadly pacifist platform, its members evangelized for a modified science informed by moral concerns and personal responsibility. For the SSRS, Moore notes, scientists who accepted military funding were complicit in the military's destructiveness. She notes correctly that, in the febrile climate of McCarthyism and red-baiting, the SSRS steered clear of notions of collective action, associated as they were with communism. But here she could have developed further the religious undercurrents of the SSRS--the Quaker emphasis on individual witnessing, on listening to and nurturing the voice within and acting in accordance with one's conscience.

One of the few times the SSRS spoke out as a group was in opposing U.S. Army attempts to recruit scientists to work on chemical and biological weaponry (CBW). Here the U.S. military makes one of its few explicit appearances in Moore's study. But, while examining the principled stance of the SSRS against CBW, Moore fails to examine fully the Army's rationale for pursuing these weapons. In the context of Cold War competition and deterrence theory, did the Army have a defensible reason for further developing CBW?

Moore next turns to the Greater St. Louis Citizens' Committee for Nuclear Information (CNI) and its efforts during the late 1950s and early 1960s to showcase the dangers of above-ground nuclear testing. In contrast to the SSRS, the CNI believed that scientists had a collective responsibility to provide the best possible information, not just to elite circles, but to the public at large. Moore titles this chapter "Information and Political Neutrality," which emphasizes that these scientists (and other committee members, notably medical professionals and women activists) saw their efforts as apolitical, even if others did not.

Moore rightly notes that the CNI, in its warnings against the dangers of strontium-90 in nuclear fallout, had a significant impact on public perceptions of atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons. She concludes the CNI represented something new in American political and scientific discourse--voluntary public participation, employing traditional concepts of liberalism, which challenged technocratic elites on their own ground.

Moore's third and clearest case of truly "disruptive" scientists comes in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Scientists for Social and Political Action, later known as Science for the People (SftP), actively worked to change societal power relations and structures--not just military ones, but within universities, professional organizations, and economic systems. Instead of serving a military that was increasingly seen as corrupt, members of the SftP worked to change the purpose and content of science to empower the disenfranchised vis-à-vis the ruling elites. In their activism, they rejected the "liberal information" model of the CNI as too timid and the conscientious objection model of the SSRS as too pure. Organized and direct action was what was needed, whether against a technically flawed and militarily escalatory antiballistic missile (ABM) system or an immoral war in Vietnam.

Moore situates the emergence of the SftP by addressing the "March 4" movement at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), which in the spring of 1969 called for the decoupling of research from military/governmental imperatives. This movement, Moore concludes, drew "thousands of scientists into organized debates about the proper relationship between science and relationships of power in the United States and elsewhere" (p. 146). But, as she also notes, the heated and sometimes uncivil debates threatened the public image and status of scientists as cool-headed and authoritative arbiters of natural "truths."

As activists, the SftP were outspoken, attacking America's "Death Oriented Culture" and pre-

senting Edward Teller, father of the hydrogen bomb, with the "Dr. Strangelove Award" in the form of a wood-and-chrome soldier that included the phrase "I am just following orders" (p. 166). The SftP also attacked the Jason scientists, a select group who provided technical advice to the Pentagon. Moore captures the revulsion of the Jasons at the "totalitarian" tactics of intimidation used by the SftP. But she is concerned neither to commend nor condemn the SftP. Rather, she tacitly endorses their ability to reveal that "the values and beliefs of scientists, their sponsors, and those who used science ought to be included in debates about the veracity and social value of scientific claims" (p. 187)--a position that has become something of a truism in (post)modern sociology of science.

"Disrupting Science" is a catchy title, but most of the scientists Moore examines sought not to disrupt science but to bring moral or political concerns about the content and uses of science to the forefront. As Moore notes herself in an endnote, whereas she coined the term "activist scientist" in 1996, most of her subjects working in the 1950s and 1960s saw themselves as apolitical--a characterization she explains away by suggesting it was constructed in response to fears of governmental repression and retaliation (n. 26, pp. 218-219). Here Moore could have shown more sensitivity to actors' categories. If not in their own eyes "activists," these scientists nevertheless showed fortitude in resisting the sweeping powers of the U.S. national security state.

What is missing from Moore's study is the politics of the military. Rarely does the U.S. military make an appearance, and when it does, it is presented as a monolith, a looming presence that largely stands apart from scientists and their world. Thus, Moore misses divisions and quarrels within the military, such as interservice rivalries for control of what we now term "weapons of mass destruction." While demonstrating considerable acuity in detailing the sociology of science, she says little about the sociology of the military,

including the military's powerful interest, even faith, in science.

Borrowing a metaphor that Moore employs, we could in many cases speak of science as a "co-production" of scientists and the military. This would entail a closer look at the intricacies of shared power relationships. In possessing the money and security clearances, the military may have held the high ground. Yet, not all in the military held the same position, nor were scientists without power of their own, most commonly in the form of their unique skills and expertise.

A great value of Moore's study is that she stimulates such reflections. She moves the study of scientists and the military beyond the usual suspects, and suggests several avenues for how we might yet build more democratic arrangements. To provide just one contemporary example, what is the best approach to global warming today? Is it to take a personal and moral stance as stewards of the Earth, as many evangelicals are now doing? Is it to share the best science, even "inconvenient truths," as broadly as possible to stimulate informed public debate? Is it to take direct action to change our governmental/corporate/societal structures of power? Surely, all three approaches, and more, are relevant.

As the U.S. government's budget for national and homeland security approaches three-quarters of a trillion dollars in fiscal year 2009, and the roles of science and technology continue to expand in our daily lives, our collective need for nuanced studies of the relations between the military and science is ever more pressing. Moore's thoughtful study points the way.

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