

The new American McCarthyism: policing thought about the Middle East

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Abstract: September 11 ushered in a sustained campaign by the American Right and the Bush administration to delegitimise critical thought about the Middle East, Islam and the Arab world. The Middle East Studies Association (MESA) has borne much of the brunt of this campaign, some of it conducted by think-tanks with close links to Israel's ruling circles. Such attacks on MESA date back to 1967 and the Arab-Israeli war. The role of organisations such as ADL, AIPAC, AVOT and ACTA is examined, as is Campus-Watch and the attempt to introduce legislation in 2003 to place university-level Middle East studies under much closer government control (via HR 3077).

Keywords: ADL, AIPAC, Bush, Campus-Watch, HR 3077, Islam, Israel, MESA, Palestine, Right, war on terrorism

Since the September 11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, supporters of George W. Bush's Manichaean view

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of the world have mounted a sustained campaign to delegitimise critical thought about the Middle East. They have exploited the understandable fears of the American people to intimidate and defame ordinary citizens, public figures, scholars who study the Middle East and the Islamic world and elected officials who have publicly criticised the Bush administration's war on Afghanistan, the prospect of an endless 'war on terrorism', the assault on Iraq and the indulgence of Israel's repression of the Palestinian people. Universities and colleges have been a particular target of policing what may be thought and said about the Middle East because they are among the few institutions where intelligent political discourse remains possible in the United States.

The Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) has been subjected to a barrage of intemperate attacks. MESA is the largest organisation of scholars who study the Middle East. Its members include students, teachers and interested individuals from all the academic disciplines and are citizens of North America, Europe and the Middle East. Conservative pundits accuse MESA members, not the FBI or the CIA, of bearing responsibility for what befell us on September 11 because we failed to warn the American public about the dangers of radical Islam. They do not consider that President Bush might be held responsible for his failure to attend to terrorist threats the summer before the September 11 attacks. For the neo-conservative true believers, the buck never stops where a Republican president is sitting. Scholars who stray from their doctrine are a much easier target.

The current campaign of vilification, guilt by association, guilt by ethnic or religious affiliation and delegitimation of dissenting opinions recalls the early years of the cold war. Then, the American people were whipped into an anti-communist frenzy by the infamous Republican senator from Wisconsin, Joseph McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). McCarthy and his minions epitomised the tendency in American political life that conflates dissent with treason. Claiming to find communist conspiracies in every corner of American life, McCarthy and HUAC conducted modern-day witch hunts. Scholars of East Asia were blamed for 'losing' China, and the Rosenbergs were blamed for the Soviet Union's development of nuclear weapons. Then, as now, fear of a foreign enemy and an unfamiliar ideology was deployed to bully the American people into abandoning customary standards of civil liberties, academic freedom and common sense. There are, of course, important differences between the two historical periods. But the similarities are nonetheless striking.

AVOT, ACTA and the 'defence of civilisation'

The hysterical tone and political character of the effort to muzzle criticism of the Bush administration's foreign policy are exemplified by the inflated rhetoric of Americans for Victory over Terrorism (AVOT), founded in March 2002 by former secretary of education, former drug czar and moralist to the nation William Bennett. AVOT is a subsidiary of the Project for a New American Century, the think-tank distinguished by its energetic efforts to promote a US war on Iraq since 1998. Its principal funder is Lawrence Kadish, chairman of the Republican Jewish Coalition, which seeks to bring Jews into the Republican Party. AVOT aims to 'take to task those who blame America first and who do not understand – or who are unwilling to defend – our fundamental principles'. On 10 March 2002, Bennett published an open letter as an advertisement in the *New York Times* describing the external and internal threats to the United States. The external threat comprises 'radical Islamists and others'. The internal threat consists of 'those who are attempting to use this opportunity to promulgate their agenda of "blame America first"'. AVOT's list of internal enemies includes former president Jimmy Carter. Carter's offence was to criticise the 'axis of evil' notion that President Bush advanced in his 2002 State of the Union address as 'overly simplistic' and 'counter-productive'. Other internal enemies include congressional representative and Democratic presidential candidate Dennis Kucinich of Cleveland and Democratic representative Maxine Waters of Los Angeles.

The first post-September 11 expression of the link between the neo-conservative political agenda and the attack on critical thinking about the Middle East was a report issued by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) in November 2001 entitled 'Defending civilization: how our universities are failing America and what can be done about it'.¹ As the title suggests, ACTA maintained that criticism of the Bush administration's war on Afghanistan on campuses across the country was tantamount to negligence in 'defending civilization' and proof that 'our universities are failing America'. ACTA alleged that American universities were brought to this sorry state by inadequate teaching of western culture and American history. Consequently, students and faculty did not understand what was at stake in the fight against terrorism and were undermining the defence of civilisation by asking too many questions.

ACTA was founded by Lynne Cheney, the wife of Vice-President Dick Cheney. Former Democratic presidential candidate Senator Joseph Lieberman is a member of its national council. Although she is no longer officially active in ACTA, a lengthy quote by Ms Cheney

appears on the cover of the report, giving the document the appearance of a quasi-official statement of government policy.

The original version of 'Defending civilization' named and quoted comments by 117 university faculty members, staff and students in reaction to the September 11 attacks. ACTA's ire was aroused by my statement that, 'If Usama bin Laden is confirmed to be behind the attacks, the United States should bring him before an international tribunal on charges of crimes against humanity'. Other remarks in the report's list of unacceptable speech included 'Ignorance breeds hate' and '[T]here needs to be an understanding of why this kind of suicidal violence could be undertaken against our country'.

Of course, ACTA's attack on American universities in the name of 'defending civilization' was calculated to suppress any form of dissent from the militarised policy response to the September 11 attacks. By vilifying those who attempted to engage in a debate over the efficacy of a war against Afghanistan and by creating a list of those who did not religiously endorse the line of the Bush administration, ACTA revealed its affinity with the McCarthyite tradition in American political life. After receiving considerable criticism for resuscitating the tactics so infamously deployed during the McCarthy era, ACTA removed the appendix to the report containing the names and quotes.

Some of those named in the ACTA report were teachers and students of the Middle East and Central Asia. But, like AVOT, ACTA's effort to quash free speech and political debate did not discriminate by specifically targeting them. ACTA is an equal opportunity defamer and considers anyone who criticises the Bush administration's foreign policy an enemy of civilisation.

MESA – un-American scholarship?

A band of neo-conservative pundits with strong allegiances to Israel took on the task of launching a more focused assault on Middle East scholars. The principal players in this drama are Martin Kramer, who authored a hot-headed and poorly researched tract attacking MESA published by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP), and Daniel Pipes, who directs the Middle East Forum which hosts the neo-McCarthyite Campus-Watch website.² Kramer and Pipes have PhDs in Middle East studies. While they have supporters, mainly among older and more traditional scholars, most of the scholarly community have criticised their work as overly general, essentialist and polemical.³ Hence, they have retreated from academia to WINEP and the Middle East Forum – think-tanks with close ties to Israel's ruling circles. Somewhat less prominent, though equally persistent, is Stanley Kurtz, a contributing editor of *National Review Online* and a fellow of the Hoover Institution, a veteran conservative think-

tank located on the campus of Stanford University. Kurtz has a PhD in anthropology with a specialisation in South Asia, but no Middle East credentials. Bit players include Jonathan Schanzer, sometime co-author of columns in the *New York Post* with Pipes, Jay Nordlinger, managing editor of *National Review*, and Marc Rauch and David Horowitz of *FrontPageMagazine.com*. Horowitz is the most notorious of the erstwhile 1960s radicals who turned on his former associates with a vengeance.

The gist of the neo-conservative attack on Middle East scholars is that MESA has been taken over by a crowd of postcolonial studies/postmodernist extremists inspired by the late Edward Said's book *Orientalism*. These un-American radicals, they claim, have imposed an intellectual and political orthodoxy on the study of Islam and the Middle East. Martin Kramer's *Ivory Towers on Sand: the failure of Middle Eastern studies in America* is the fullest expression of that argument. Kramer argues that Edward Said is responsible for what went wrong in American Middle East studies and a good deal else besides.

Why Kramer decided that Said is such a bogeyman is unclear. Perhaps it is because Bernard Lewis, in addition to exemplifying the style of scholarship Said disparaged, was Kramer's teacher at Princeton University and is, along with the late Elie Kedourie and P. J. Vatikiotis, an intellectual patron of the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies at Tel Aviv University, of which Kramer is a former director. Said and Lewis had an ugly exchange in the *New York Review of Books* incited by Lewis's harsh review of *Orientalism*.⁴ Subsequently, Said overwhelmed Lewis in a public debate on the topic of 'The scholars, the media, and the Middle East' held at the annual MESA meeting in November 1986.⁵ But Said was never a regular presence at MESA and did not even belong to the organisation until he was made an honorary fellow in 1999. His 1986 appearance at the MESA annual meeting was his first. He did not return for a second time until 1998, when he attended a plenary session dedicated to assessing the impact of *Orientalism* twenty years after its publication. Kramer attended that session and remonstrated loudly in a manner that was considered unprofessional by many of those present.

Said's *Orientalism* has certainly affected American Middle East studies, and rightly so. It is an important and intellectually impressive work. But it is not without flaws. Hence, it was not and should not have been received uncritically, nor did it eliminate other approaches to, and understandings of, the Middle East.

Kramer's claim that wholesale adoption of Said's views by the leading members of MESA led to the failure of the entire edifice of American Middle East studies is contradicted by his own evidence. He cites a critical review of *Orientalism* published by the late Malcolm Kerr, a former MESA president, in MESA's *International Journal of*

Middle East Studies – the leading scholarly publication in the field.⁶ Kramer also quotes former MESA president Nikki Keddie, who wrote that, while *Orientalism* was ‘important and in many ways positive’, it had ‘some unfortunate consequences’, among them that ‘Orientalism for many people is a word that substitutes for thought and enables people to dismiss certain scholars and their works . . . It may not have been what Said meant at all, but the term has become a kind of slogan.’⁷ These critical comments by former MESA presidents who are highly regarded by their peers demonstrate that there is no orthodoxy and no wholesale adoption of Saidian ideas.

Kramer explicitly denigrates several scholars whose approach to modern Islam he deems faulty: John Esposito, John Voll, Richard Bulliet and Fawaz Gerges. But any careful reading of their work will reveal that, while they differ from Kramer’s understanding of modern Islamic movements, their work does not reflect the slightest intellectual influence of Said, cultural studies, postcolonialism or postmodernism – all things Kramer abhors. Similarly, Kramer pours scorn on Roger Owen, Philip Khoury, Robert Fernea, Elizabeth Fernea, Michael Hudson, Rashid Khalidi and Augustus Richard Norton for their interpretations of modern Arab politics. But, with the partial exception of Khalidi’s *Palestinian Identity: the construction of modern national consciousness*, their rather traditional, empiricist methods also reveal no evidence of Said’s intellectual influence. What is common to all these scholars is that, despite the variety of their work and their negligible affinities to post-anything, they are more critical of Israeli policy towards the Palestinians than Kramer and his enthusiasts are willing to tolerate. And since their opinions are also more critical of Israel than the views commonly presented in the US mass media, it is possible to make a case – a woefully uninformed one, to be sure – for Kramer’s position.

The Israel connection and its history

The unstated, but never entirely concealed, agenda of shielding Israel from criticism links the efforts of Kramer and Pipes to earlier attempts to monitor teaching and research on the Middle East. There is a substantial history of the targeting of Middle East studies in the US. It is part of the context for the current attacks and is worth appreciating because what is happening today is, in part, the culmination of a trend that has been in the making since 1967. That trend was forced on to the defensive in the late 1980s and 1990s by concerted opposition from the scholarly community. But it has been revived since the Bush administration’s declaration of war on terrorism.

After the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and the demise of the Black-Jewish coalition that was central to the American civil rights movement, the

American Jewish Committee (AJC), whose mission includes strengthening 'the basic principles of pluralism around the world, as the best defense against anti-Semitism and other forms of bigotry',⁸ the B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation League (ADL), whose purpose is to expose and combat anti-Semitism, and the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), the leading Zionist lobbying organisation, sounded alarms about the increasing influence of 'Arab propaganda' on university campuses. They began to monitor the activities of students and teachers whom they considered 'anti-Israel' and they frequently suggested that criticism of Israel was equivalent to anti-Semitism.

During the 1970s, public criticism of Israel and Zionism increased, in large measure due to the activities of the newly formed Association of Arab-American University Graduates and the bold interventions of Noam Chomsky. However, it remained a phenomenon limited primarily to the academy. Even in colleges and universities, few non-Arab teachers or students had the mettle to face the inevitable charges of anti-Semitism or the even more ludicrous 'self-hating Jew' routinely directed at those who opposed Israel's occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (along with the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights) and supported the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. This began to change when the former terrorist leader Menachem Begin became prime minister of Israel in 1977. The expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank during the Begin regime (1977–83) signalled that occupation and annexation might become a long-term affair. Some Palestinian leaders in the occupied territories and abroad began to seek Israeli and Jewish partners for a struggle against Begin's policies. This posed a substantial threat to the likes of the AJC, the ADL and AIPAC because it reduced the credibility of the charge of anti-Semitism aimed at critics of Israel.

One of the initial public sorties reflecting the more aggressive posture of American Jewish organisations, which adopted as their mission protecting Israel from criticism, came from the Tucson Jewish Community Council. In 1981, the council charged that the outreach programme (i.e. activities aimed at the general public and K-12 teachers) of the Near Eastern Center of the University of Arizona and its coordinator were guilty of anti-Israel bias. An external investigating committee dismissed the charge of bias.⁹ Unsatisfied with this outcome, the AJC commissioned Gary Schiff to prepare a report which surveyed centres for Middle East studies at several universities. The Schiff report expressed concern about 'possible bias in outreach programs dealing with the controversial issues that surround the Middle East'. Schiff considered it ominous that, unlike Arabic, Turkish and Persian, federally funded fellowships were not available for the study of Hebrew because the US government did not define Hebrew as a 'critical language' (i.e. a less commonly taught language whose study should

be encouraged to enhance national security). Finally, Schiff was troubled by the provision of funding by Arab states to centres for Middle East studies at universities such as Princeton and Georgetown.¹⁰

In November 1983, the New England regional office of the ADL, reacting to increased criticism of Israel following its invasion of Lebanon in 1982, distributed a booklet designed 'to help Jewish students deal with anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic activities on college campus'.¹¹ Once again, there was no clear distinction between the two. The booklet lists 'anti-Israel' organisations and individuals, with an emphasis on those in New England and northern California. The same year, the national ADL published *Pro-Arab Propaganda in America: vehicles and voices, a handbook*. These were the first efforts to compile lists of university faculty and staff whose opinions did not accord with the Zionist doctrine. They were not the last.

In 1983, the London monthly, *The Middle East*, reported that 'AIPAC puts a lot of effort into monitoring anti-Israel speakers. Tapes and notes are collected and files compiled.'¹² In 1984, AIPAC compiled a 187-page college guide whose objective was to 'expos[e] the anti-Israel campaign on campus'.¹³ A twelve-page questionnaire filled out by students who volunteered to do so (i.e. those sympathetic to AIPAC's world view) provided the basis for the information in the guide. Students were invited to 'name any individual faculty who assist anti-Israel groups. How is this assistance offered? (If there is a Middle East Study Center, please elaborate on its impact on campus.)'¹⁴

MESA responded to these activities by the ADL and AIPAC by passing, after a hotly contested debate, a resolution at its 1984 annual meeting which described the publications of the ADL and AIPAC as 'factually inaccurate and unsubstantiated' and 'unbalanced'. The resolution called on the ADL and AIPAC to 'disavow and refrain from such activities'.¹⁵ It signalled that a majority of MESA's most active members were no longer intimidated by the fear of being labelled anti-Semites when discussing the Arab-Israeli conflict. Thus, MESA became a dubious institution among American Jewish organisations (like the ADL and AIPAC) whose identity was dependent largely upon their uncritical support for Israel. Some of the minority of Middle East scholars who shared the views of the ADL and AIPAC – most visibly concentrated at Princeton and Johns Hopkins universities – stopped attending MESA meetings.

It is worth noting in passing that organisations like the ADL and AIPAC do not, in fact, speak for a majority of Jews in the United States. About half of American Jews belong to no Jewish organisation whatsoever, some of them precisely because they do not wish to be associated with uncritical support for Israel.

The ADL went beyond merely monitoring institutions and individuals that it considered 'anti-Israel' and/or 'anti-Semitic'.¹⁶ In April

1993, San Francisco police seized over 10,000 files from the ADL's local office. The files had been compiled from information provided by Roy Bullock, who had worked as a 'fact finder' for the ADL since the 1960s. Bullock sold information to the ADL, the South African intelligence agency and possibly also to the Israeli Mossad and worked occasionally for the FBI. He compiled dossiers on some 10,000 individuals and 600 organisations labelled 'pinkos', 'right', 'Arabs', 'skins' and 'ANC' (the African National Congress). Among those subjected to surveillance were the San Francisco Labor Council, ILWU Local 10, the Oakland Educational Association, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Irish Northern Aid, the International Indian Treaty Council, the faculty of Mills College and the Asian Law Caucus. San Francisco police estimated that 75 per cent of Bullock's information had been illegally obtained. Police inspector Tom Gerard had supplied Bullock with confidential information about his targets in exchange for an \$8,000 fee. Gerard was indicted for illegal use of a police computer in 1994 and fled to the Philippines. He eventually pleaded guilty to a misdemeanour charge of illegally accessing government information. The ADL made out-of-court cash settlements with the city of San Francisco, the Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee and three individuals.

Despite the illegal over-zealousness of the San Francisco office of the ADL, from the mid-1980s until the September 11 terrorist attacks, there were only occasional efforts to defame individual Middle East scholars who were critical of Israel and US Middle East policy. An unknown number of professorial appointments and promotions were tainted by political pressure. But, in part because of MESA's resistance to the agenda of the ADL and AIPAC, there was no concerted campaign.

A new phase – Campus-Watch and the neo-conservatives

Publication of Kramer's *Ivory Towers on Sand* heralded the beginning of such a campaign and a new phase in the efforts to subject critical thinking in Middle East studies to surveillance. Kramer and his ilk were emboldened by their links to officials in the upper-mid levels of the Bush administration such as Richard Perle, former chair (and still a member) of the Defense Advisory Board, Paul Wolfowitz, deputy Secretary of Defense, Douglas Feith, deputy Secretary of State, and Elliott Abrams, National Security Advisor for the Middle East. They had mutual affiliations with WINEP, the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs, the Project for a New American Century and other conservative think-tanks whose ambit is broader than the Middle East.

The neo-cons have much more powerful political connections than those that the AJC, the ADL and AIPAC were able to mobilise for their campaigns of defamation in the early 1980s, which largely failed to silence criticism of Israel and US Middle East policy in American universities. Because of September 11 and the wars against Afghanistan and Iraq, the Middle East is a more prominent topic in public culture, albeit largely in a caricatured form, than ever before. Moreover, internet technology has enabled the neo-cons to reach a much broader audience.

The pretentiously-named Campus-Watch website established by Daniel Pipes purports, in language removed from the website after it aroused a storm of criticism because of its naked McCarthyite character, to 'monitor and gather information on professors who fan the flames of disinformation, incitement, and ignorance'. Campus-Watch alleges that Middle East scholars 'seem generally to dislike their own country and think even less of American allies abroad. They portray U.S. policy in an unfriendly light and disparage allies.' Campus-Watch asserts that 'Middle East studies in the United States has become the preserve of Middle Eastern Arabs, who have brought their views with them. Membership in the Middle East Studies Association (MESA), the main scholarly association, is now 50 percent of Middle Eastern origin.' Therefore, MESA is, Campus-Watch implies, an unpatriotic and not truly American organisation.

These assertions are false and brazenly bigoted. Expressing dissent from prevailing foreign policy is no indication of whether one does or does not like the United States. Such dissent is in the tradition of democratic patriotism. The majority of MESA members are not of Middle Eastern origin. Moreover, casting aspersions on scholars, or anyone else for that matter, because of their national origin violates the fundamental spirit of American liberties and misrepresents the history of the United States as an immigrant society.

The unabashed racism in the statement of purpose of Campus-Watch does not seem to be a one-time slip of the tongue. Pipes has described Muslim immigrants to western Europe, in language suggesting he may or may not endorse this view, as 'brown-skinned peoples cooking strange foods and maintaining different standards of hygiene. Muslim customs', he wrote, 'are more troublesome than most.'¹⁷

On the basis of such scholarly insight and empathetic understanding of foreign cultures, in the spring of 2003 President Bush nominated Pipes to a seat on the board of directors of the federally funded United States Institute of Peace, whose mission is to sponsor research promoting peaceful conflict resolution. After massive expressions of opposition to Pipes' nomination from a broad spectrum of individuals and organisations, including some Jewish groups, the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions declined to approve

Pipes' nomination. Nonetheless, the President partially had his way by making a recess appointment after the Senate adjourned for the summer. Pipes may serve on the board, but for less than a full term. This episode indicated that what began as an apparently arcane debate among scholars had assumed national political significance.

In June 2003, Stanley Kurtz testified before the House Committee on Education and the Workforce that, 'Title VI-funded programs in Middle Eastern Studies (and other area studies) tend to purvey extreme and one-sided criticisms of American foreign policy'.¹⁸ He urged legislators to take action to ensure 'balance'. Representative Peter Hoekstra (R-Michigan) obliged by introducing a bill designated the International Studies in Higher Education Act (HR 3077).¹⁹ The bill passed the House of Representatives by a unanimous voice vote in October 2003. In March 2004, the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions had the measure on its agenda. Its fate is undecided as of this writing.

HR 3077 reauthorises funding for Title VI of the National Defense Education Act of 1958 and the Higher Education Act of 1965, which provides about \$95 million for graduate fellowships, language training and community outreach to 118 centres for regional area studies. It would also establish an International Education Advisory Board with investigative powers 'to study, monitor, apprise, and evaluate' activities supported by Title VI. The advisory board is charged with ensuring that government-funded academic programmes 'reflect diverse perspectives and represent the full range of views' on international affairs.²⁰ Three of the board members are to be appointed by the secretary of education; two of those will represent government agencies with national security responsibilities (the CIA, the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security, etc.). The leaders of the House of Representatives and the Senate each will appoint two more.

Everyone understands that 'diverse perspectives' in this context is code for limited criticism of US Middle East policy, in general, and of Israel, in particular. The legislation is not motivated by concern with what centres for Latin American or East Asian studies are doing. The International Studies in Higher Education Act would immediately impact only upon the seventeen federally funded national resource centres for Middle East studies at US universities. But this is clearly a dangerous precedent, portending the possibility of direct government interference in teaching, public programming and research.

The activities of AVOT, ACTA, Martin Kramer, Daniel Pipes, Stanley Kurtz, Campus-Watch and the introduction of HR 3077 bear the marks of a concerted campaign. The principal figures involved have more than a casual attachment to Ariel Sharon's understanding of the Middle East. The core proposition of that understanding in the post-September 11 period, which Sharon has successfully sold to the

Bush administration, is that Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian Authority are equivalent to Osama bin Laden and al Qaida. The effect of this campaign has been to open the door to a host of other statements and political initiatives that imperil free discussion of the Middle East, and potentially much more.

The accusation of anti-Semitism

Academic freedom and open debate on Middle East-related issues were very badly served by the widely reported sloppy thinking of Harvard University President Lawrence Summers, former Secretary of the Treasury in the Clinton administration. At the start of the 2002–03 academic year, he addressed a student prayer meeting and argued that harsh criticisms of Israel were ‘anti-Semitic in their effect if not their intent’.²¹ Among other things, Summers was referring to a petition signed by 600 Harvard and MIT faculty, staff and students to divest university funds from companies that do business in Israel, as a protest against Israel’s continuing occupation of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem. Similar efforts with a range of formulations of the target were subsequently launched at over forty colleges and universities. One need not support the substance of the demand for divestment in order to discern the difference between anti-Semitism and even the most vehement criticism of Israel. Whatever one thinks of the demand for divestment, it is directed at specific policies of the state of Israel. It is, therefore, not inherently anti-Semitic.

Summers may have thought that he was expressing himself in a reasoned way to an academic audience. But the conflation of criticism of Israel and anti-Semitism was an already well-established ploy. The endorsement of this notion by the president of the country’s most prestigious institution of higher learning authorised others to go on the political offensive without fear that they would be criticised as boorish enemies of academic freedom.

The ADL, the Likud-affiliated Zionist Organization of America, the American Jewish Committee and the Hillel Foundation (the parent body of the largest Jewish student organisation) have sought to convince federal legislators that there is a wave of anti-Semitism on American campuses. The ADL’s ‘annual audit’ of anti-Semitic activity in America detected an increase of 24 per cent in anti-Semitic activities on US college campuses during 2002.²² However, the entire increase in incidents of anti-Semitism on US campuses, according to the ADL’s own statistics, amounted to twenty-one actions.

Among these were several high-profile incidents, most of them motivated by opposition to Israel’s policies towards the Palestinians. Paradoxically, by failing to make a clear distinction between anti-Semitism, which should always and everywhere be opposed, and anti-Zionism,

which is a legitimate political opinion, the ADL and like-minded organisations exposed American Jews to attack because they were identified with Israel.

In the spring of 2003, several Republican senators and aides met with representatives of the ADL, the American Jewish Committee, the Likud-affiliated Zionist Organization of America and the Hillel Foundation. Shortly thereafter, the third-ranking Republican member of the US Senate, Rick Santorum (PA), announced that he planned to introduce so-called 'ideological diversity' legislation that would cut federal funding to colleges and universities that permit professors, students and student organisations to openly criticise Israel. Like the ADL and some other organisations that purport to represent American Jews, Santorum considers criticism of Israel equivalent to anti-Semitism. Santorum has not yet formulated his announcement into an actual bill.²³

Most of those who have attacked the Middle East Studies Association and individuals identified as foreign policy dissidents spend their days in think-tanks where they are paid to hobnob with foreign policy-makers and mass media opinion-makers. They mainly write op-eds and policy think pieces. They do not, for the most part, engage in the primary recognised activities of scholars: teaching and research. These individuals are on the far-Right margin of the Bush administration's power base. They serve as its attack dogs. It is easy to show that their scholarship and commentary on the Middle East are defective.²⁴ In fact, most Middle East scholars have long ago rejected their views. That is one of the sources of their unhappiness. It would be reasonable to conclude that perhaps scholars who study the modern Middle East know something worth listening to, even if it does not accord with the views of right-wing radicals. But the neo-McCarthyites already know what they want to hear.

Having failed to win in the marketplace of ideas, the neo-McCarthyites seek to use the power of the state to suppress wayward thinking. Consequently, this is a political fight, not merely a scholarly debate. The battle for ideas is surely a component of this struggle, but academic freedom is likely to be severely attenuated if the professoriate restricts itself to that arena. Even if only in self-defence, students and scholars who want to preserve their right to think and speak and write critically about the Middle East, and potentially much else beyond, need to expose those who are assaulting our liberties and take the case for academic freedom to the public.

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- 16 Bob Egelko, 'Jewish defense group settles S.F. spying suit', *San Francisco Chronicle* (23 February 2002); Dan Evans, 'Paper trail of deceit', *San Francisco Examiner* (1 April 2002).
- 17 Daniel Pipes, 'The Muslims are coming! The Muslims are coming!', *National Review* (19 November 1990).
- 18 < http://www.house.gov/ed_workforce/hearings/108th/sed/titlevi61903/kurtz.htm > . Much of this testimony is a recapitulation of Kramer's book.

- 19 Information in the next two paragraphs is partly based on a report on the status of HR 3077 in National Coalition for History, *Washington Update* 10 (No. 7, 20 February 2004), < <http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=vx&list=H-NCH&month=0402&week=c&msg=6TVRRgan222jFnJdLseTVg&user=&pw=>> .
- 20 There are several different versions of the bill. These quotes are taken from the version Martin Kramer supports: < http://www.geocities.com/martinkramerorg/2003_10_14.htm > .
- 21 Lawrence Summers, 'Address at morning prayers', Memorial Church, Cambridge, Massachusetts (17 September 2002), < <http://president.harvard.edu/speeches/2002/morningprayers.html> > .
- 22 B'nai B'rith Anti Defamation League, 'ADL releases new figures on anti-Semitic incidents: more than 1,500 acts reported across U.S. in 2002. Campus figures up 24 percent' (26 March 2003), < http://www.adl.org/presrele/asus_12/4243_12.asp > .
- 23 Timothy Starks, 'Universities resist efforts to require ideological diversity on campuses', *New York Sun* (15 April 2003).
- 24 See, Lapidus, op. cit.; Halliday, op. cit.; Turner, op. cit.; Hinnebusch, op. cit.; Wilson, op. cit.; Siavoshi, op. cit.; and Hardy, op. cit.

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