

forces that he represented and the events that he helped set in motion have yielded at best mixed results.

In its trial run, the doctrine of preventive war—Wolfowitz's handiwork as much as the president's—has produced liberation and occupation, a crisp demonstration of "shock and awe" and a protracted, debilitating insurgency, the dramatic toppling of a dictator and horrifying evidence implicating American soldiers in torture and other abuses. The Iraq War has now entered its third year with no end in sight, taxing U.S. forces to the limit. The ongoing conflict has divided the nation like no event since Vietnam. Like Vietnam, it is sapping our economic strength and has already done immeasurable damage to our standing in the world. Despite expectations of Saddam's overthrow paving the way for what some expected to be a foreign policy of moral incandescence, the United States finds itself obliged once again to compromise its ideals, cozying up to little Saddams like Pakistan's Pervez Musharraf and Uzbekistan's Islam Karimov.

The forces that Paul Wolfowitz helped unleash—a dangerous combination of hubris and naïveté—are exacting an ever mounting cost. His considerable exertions notwithstanding, truth in matters of statecraft remains implacably gray. Even assuming honorable intentions on the part of those who conceived this war, wielding power in Iraq has left the United States up to its ankles, if not up to its knees, in guilt.

In his solitude, General Shinseki can await the final judgment of history with considerable confidence. At the pinnacle of professional success, Paul Wolfowitz must look forward to a different verdict that will be anything but kind. ■

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Muzzling Mideast Studies

The neocon assault on academic dissent

By Anders Strindberg

IN OCTOBER 2004, the *New York Sun* reported that a Boston-based student activist group called the David Project had produced a film documenting the supposedly horrifying conditions at Columbia University: Jewish students were allegedly subjected to intimidation, verbal abuse, and systematic discrimination by pro-Palestinian faculty. Entitled "Columbia Unbecoming," it contained interviews with students the *Sun* described as feeling "threatened academically for expressing a pro-Israel point of view in classrooms," but featured none of the accused professors nor the satisfied majority of students.

"Columbia Unbecoming" generated a swift response. Congressman Anthony Weiner, along with the *Sun* and the *New York Daily News* editorial pages, called for the dismissal of a professor named in the film. Members of the New York City Council demanded investigations. The *Sun* labeled the incident the "Crisis at Columbia"; a November 21 *Daily News* story was headlined "Poison Ivy: Climate of Hate Rocks Columbia University."

The controversy at Columbia is part of a broader neoconservative effort to suppress debate over U.S. policy in the Middle East. Following the 9/11 atrocities, neoconservative commentators were up in arms about the "failure" of Middle East studies: scholars should have realized the imminent danger of the Islamic revival and focused on terrorism instead of theory. "America's academics have failed to predict or explain the major evolutions of Middle Eastern politics and society over the past two decades," wrote Martin Kramer, an

Israeli academic and senior editor of *Middle East Quarterly*. American scholars, he argued, "have been taken by surprise by their subjects; time and again, their paradigms have been swept away by events."

Scholars had long warned that American interventionism in the Middle East could create a harmful backlash. Prior to 9/11, such warnings were dismissed as either "isolationism" or "Third Worldism." Today, the suggestion that our foreign policy could somehow be connected to regional resentment is lambasted as "anti-Americanism."

The tenor of the neoconservative assault has grown uglier, turning from sharp ideological criticism to smears redolent of the worst excesses of the McCarthy era. Scholars once ridiculed as "irrelevant" and "obscure" now find themselves recast as "America haters," "supporters of terrorism," and "radical left-wingers" who need to be sniffed out and disposed of. "Academic colleagues, get used to it," wrote the ever-vigilant Kramer. "You are being watched. Those obscure articles in campus newspapers are now available on the Internet, and they will be harvested. Your syllabi, which you've also posted, will be scrutinized. Your websites will be visited late at night."

Neoconservative cadres claim that "wrong thought" in Middle East studies tracks with the rise of the Left on campus, casting their campaign as a struggle for conservative values. In March 2005, the Randolph Foundation released a survey on political attitudes among faculty at American universities showing that 72 percent of scholars

described themselves as liberal while only 15 percent claimed to be conservative. These findings have been ceaselessly repeated to bolster the case against Middle East studies. Yet criticism of Israel, like ideas about how to deal with the Middle East generally, does not comfortably fit into a Left and Right paradigm. Every recent American president has called for a halt to Israeli settlements on the West Bank, looked towards a just solution to the Palestine issue, and taken positions on relations with Arab states and Islamist movements that neoconservatives would now characterize as leftist. The attempt to appropriate conservatism for this campaign is fraudulent.

Another tactic is to advance the bogus claim that American academia is awash with anti-Semitic teaching. Universities are saturated with politically correct hypersensitivity on racial and religious issues. Their codes of conduct proscribe abuse, intimidation, and incendiary remarks by students and faculty alike. Anti-Semitic incidents on campus are deplorable, but by falsely alleging a massive surge of hate crimes traceable to "the dangerous ideas of the professors," the commissars are not only crying wolf but actively creating an ethnic issue where ethnicity is not the issue.

Columbia has been besieged for a simple reason: it seemed a ripe target. The university combines a large body of Jewish students with active pro-Israel groups but is also home to several of the leaders of Palestinian-American intellectual life. If the commissars could unseat unacceptable faculty, a powerful warning would be sent to universities across America, chilling debate.

The late Palestinian-American professor Edward Said taught at Columbia from the mid-1960s until his death in September 2003. Said was not only an outspoken critic of American Middle East policy and a passionate advocate of

Palestinian rights but also a widely respected scholar. Confronting and discrediting Said thus developed into an early imperative-cum-obsession for the neoconservative activists.

After his death, Columbia created an Edward Said Chair of Arab Studies, and another Palestinian-American, Rashid Khalidi, formerly a professor at the University of Chicago, took up the position. Even before Khalidi accepted the post, however, Daniel Pipes, columnist for the *New York Sun* and the *Jerusalem Post* and founder of the most important of the watchdog groups, Campus Watch, complained that the new appointee "is just the picture of what is wrong with Middle East academic specialists in the United States." He explained that Khalidi "is extreme. He is inaccurate. He is apologetic to tyranny and radicalism," but "that's what Columbia likes."

Khalidi, an Oxford Ph.D. and the author of six books on the Middle East, has lamented American ignorance on

biased scholar to head a biased department." Demanding "balance," neoconservative groups launched a campaign against Columbia's only chair in modern Arab studies while lobbying for the creation of a new chair in Israel studies—in addition to the six endowed chairs in Jewish studies already in existence.

Khalidi has tenure and is virtually impossible to fire, but there are other ways to get to people. Following a propaganda barrage, with the editorial support of the *New York Sun* and other local dailies, the New York City Department of Education dismissed Khalidi in February 2005 from a K-12 teacher-training program. Khalidi was fired on the basis of past statements critical of Israel, even though he had already participated in the program twice without generating any complaints. "I think there's a broad attack on professors of the Middle East," Khalidi noted, "and it's based on calumnies, innuendo, and taking situations out of context."

COLUMBIA HAS BEEN BESIEGED BECAUSE IT SEEMED A RIPE TARGET.

matters related to the Middle East and has been an articulate critic of U.S. and Israeli policy. But by no stretch of the imagination is he an extremist, simply a bona fide "public intellectual."

"As a Jew, I can attest to the fact that Khalidi is hardly the anti-Semite," Halley Bondy, a Columbia student, recently wrote in the *Daily News*. "The lecture hall is filled to capacity with well over 100 students who fought tooth and nail to enroll." This mattered little to Pipes, who griped, "I think it's a problem that these universities award people with such extreme and unhealthy views with such prestigious positions." FrontPageMag.com similarly complained, "Khalidi's move to Columbia involves a biased scholar accepting an anonymously endowed chair named for a

Few academics know this better than Joseph Massad, an assistant professor in Columbia's Middle East and Asian Languages and Culture Department (MEALAC). He is the faculty member who has been targeted most ruthlessly, ostensibly because he is the most outrageous critic of Israel and Zionism. But a more sinister rationale lurks in the background. "They're trying to make an example of him," said a Columbia academic. "Massad does not have tenure yet, and if they can get him fired from Columbia, this will be sufficient to communicate to institutions across the country that they need to vet candidates for compatibility with neocon views."

Massad began teaching at Columbia in 1999, giving a course called "Palestinian and Israeli Politics and Societies."

The class was hugely popular and its size nearly doubled the second year, but his open criticism of Israel attracted attention. Moves by fellow faculty, students, and outside pressure groups to have Massad fired were in the offing.

Virtually every syllable written or uttered by Massad has been scrutinized and lambasted by the neoconservative machine. While the scholarly value of Massad's theories and conclusions should be analyzed and questioned, Pipes, Kramer, and their cohorts are concerned simply with denying anyone a right to have a view contrary to theirs.

An April 7, 2002 *Columbia Spectator* article misquoted Massad as having said, at a political rally away from the classroom, that Israel is "a Jewish supremacist and racist state" and that "every racist state should be threatened." He had said no such thing, the journalist apologized, and the paper ran a correction. But the article, along with its errors, continued to be rehashed: to this day, Campus Watch runs the original article on its website but not the correction. The erroneous quotation was highlighted by Kramer in an article in *Middle East Quarterly*, prompting him to question whether "someone who is busy propagandizing against the existence of Israel [should] be employed by Columbia..."

Massad also appeared in Campus Watch's brief attempt to maintain online dossiers on those they characterized as academic enemies of America and Israel, with a call for students to monitor and report on classes. Spam, hate mail, and death threats flooded Massad's inbox, and e-mails threatening terrorism were sent out to public figures, including members of Congress, in his name.

Behind the scenes, several national Jewish organizations convened in March 2002 to evaluate what they saw as the alarming rise in anti-Israel activity on campus. The result was the establish-

ment of the Israel on Campus Coalition (ICC). According to an article carried by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, the effort resulted in an action plan according to which "the primary goal for this year should be to 'take back the campus' by influencing public opinion through lectures, the Internet and coalitions." Not, important to note, through scholarship.

"Columbia Unbecoming," produced by the ICC's sole institutional affiliate, is an example of how this is supposed to work. Robert Pollack, a former dean of Columbia College who led the effort to raise \$13 million to build the Kraft Center—which houses Columbia's Jewish community center and in which much of the movie was filmed—remarked, "It is a crazy, crazy exaggeration to claim that Jews are under attack at Columbia or that the faculty is anti-Semitic."

In December 2004, the university nevertheless established an Ad Hoc Grievance Committee to review charges against faculty members and called for witnesses to step forward. The committee was not being asked to investigate

the faculty that could reasonably be construed as anti-Semitic." As for specific complaints against Massad and two of his MEALAC colleagues, Hamid Dabashi and George Saliba, the report exonerated the latter two but found that two complaints against Massad for politically motivated intemperate behavior were "credible"—despite conflicting and vague witness testimonies. The incidents had not been mentioned in teaching evaluations, and Massad—corroborated by other students and two teaching assistants—denied the charges.

"They clearly made a scapegoat of him," remarked another Columbia scholar. "They needed to throw something to the pressure groups to make them ease up. But the report showed once and for all that the issue of anti-Semitism at Columbia is a fabrication, a sham."

The campaign continues, now on the grounds that the committee was a collegial whitewash because it found no evidence. Meanwhile, Columbia president Lee Bollinger, one of America's foremost First Amendment scholars, continues

SPAM, HATE MAIL, AND DEATH THREATS FLOODED MASSAD'S INBOX.

political or scholarly opinions, course content, nor, as Massad had requested, intimidation of faculty, but was limited to identifying "cases where there appear to be violations of the obligation to create a civil and tolerant teaching environment in which opposing views can be expressed." Students registered complaints that they claimed to have been too afraid to make previously or simply had forgotten about until "Columbia Unbecoming" reminded them.

The committee issued its report on March 28, 2005. It found no "evidence that students had been penalized for their views by receiving lower grades," nor "evidence of any statements made by

not to stand up for either his university or its faculty's freedom of speech. It has been reported that Bollinger is under significant pressure from pro-Israel alumni, who could complicate fundraising goals, particularly as they relate to the university's plans for a \$5 billion project to expand into West Harlem.

A new storm is also brewing, this time concerning membership of the committee tasked with appointing a scholar to Columbia's new chair in modern Israel studies. In late April, the *New York Sun* warned that two of the five members "have portrayed Israel as a gross abuser of human rights and an obstacle to Middle East peace." One of these is Lila

Abu-Lughod, a prominent professor of anthropology; the other is Rashid Khalidi. The *Sun* quoted Martin Kramer as complaining that the inclusion of Abu-Lughod and Khalidi risked narrowing the range of acceptable scholars to those who are “left-of-center to the far left in the Israeli political spectrum.”

The Columbia affair is typical of the asymmetry of resources that characterizes the assault on academia. For all the furor, the railing against Massad has been limited to a small collection of non-academic neoconservative groups and an equally small group of undergraduates. But their political clout, media savvy, and well-organized activist cadre create the illusion that they represent a vast current.

On the other side stand embattled scholars, few of whom are as media savvy, none of whom have comparable financial resources, time, or staff. They may espouse controversial theories with which everyone is entitled to disagree—including the students at Columbia University. Yet politically motivated accusations by groups that want to stifle dissent have brought about a situation in which scholars are forced to spend their time sifting through hate mail and fighting the threat of dismissal.

What the critics of Middle East studies demand, they say, is truth and diversity. “We’re simply talking about failure to teach facts, failure to give two sides of an issue,” Alan Dershowitz told the Conference on Academic Integrity and the Middle East, held at Columbia in March 2005. While this is laudable, the pressure groups’ own ideas of “fact” are as one-sided as anything of which they have accused the professors. Morton Klein, head of the Zionist Organization of America, addressed the same conference precisely to explain “the facts”: anti-Zionism is always the same as anti-Semitism; Israeli human-rights abuses are “minor”; there is no Israeli occupa-

tion of the West Bank; the demand to dismantle Jewish settlements amounts to racism and ethnic cleansing; and Israel is in no way culpable for the Palestinian refugee crisis. Frequent audience applause indicated that this does indeed pass for balance among the pressure groups and their supporters.

Very few of the commissars are academics. Those who are, like Kramer, have elected to engage in polemics rather than scholarship. Once the author of scholarly work on Middle East politics and society, Kramer now fills his weblog with political diatribes against colleagues whom he thinks have been given undeserved positions, promotions, funding, or attention. Like Pipes, he shows a peculiar disdain for scholarship, preferring instead mudslinging, trivialization, and sarcasm that seems to indicate an intellectually lethal overdose of sour grapes. As the Columbia debacle indicates, however, it may actually be more effective than proper scholarship.

And the David Project is threatening to produce more documentaries about other campuses. “This is just the beginning,” warned Eric Posner, a student at Columbia and former soldier in the Israeli army who supports the faculty’s right to free speech. “This is the spearhead of a whole informant movement that is wading into American academia.”

This is a warning that needs to be taken seriously, as evidenced by reactions to the report that Khalidi has applied for the newly endowed Robert Niehaus ‘78 Chair in Contemporary Middle East Studies at Princeton University. The *Daily Princetonian* quoted Arlene Pedovitch, interim director of the Center for Jewish Life (CJL), as warning that “some Princeton alumni are very concerned about the possibility of Princeton University hiring an individual who has a political agenda rather than a scholarly approach to history.” These remarks drew a scathing

response from Stanley Katz, a CJL board member, who accused Pedovitch of contributing to a repeat of the Columbia controversy: “If CJL wants to turn Princeton into Columbia, I want nothing more to do with it.”

The *Princetonian* reported that Pedovitch fears that the appointment of Khalidi would regenerate Princeton’s image from the 1950s as a school hostile to Jews. Others have suggested that, as a result, Jewish student enrollment would decline and donors would be less generous. Student activists are already reported to have considered petitions against Khalidi’s candidacy, and the pressure groups and tabloids are taking an increasing interest.

Princeton is home to over 1,100 faculty members and almost 5,000 undergraduates. It houses more scholars listed on Campus Watch’s list of “recommended professors” than any other institution. The idea that the appointment of Khalidi would affect its institutional character is absurd. Yet by politicizing Khalidi’s application, the warning to academia is effectively reissued: “take us seriously, or your campus is next!”

Whether Massad gets tenure or Khalidi the position at Princeton should depend only on their scholarly credentials, not their political views. The commissars’ efforts to politicize academia are eerily reminiscent of New Left campus activism in the 1960s and ‘70s. Indeed, in keeping with the development of neoconservatism more generally, many of those who now claim to struggle for conservative values against the “enemies of America” are the very same individuals that once waged campus campaigns against “U.S. imperialism.” The slogans may have changed but the lack of tolerance for those espousing different views is all too familiar. ■

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On the Right Track

The conservative case for mass transit

By William S. Lind

EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY famously wrote, "Yet there isn't a train I wouldn't take, no matter where it's going." If the Bush administration gets its way, there may soon be no trains for future Miss Millays to ride. The administration's proposed 2006 budget effectively kills Amtrak. In fact, the railroad may run out of cash before the end of fiscal 2005.

The recent brake problems of Amtrak's premier trains, the Acelas, which have taken them out of service until summer, are just the proverbial tip of the iceberg. At stake for the future are not only Amtrak's 25 million annual passengers but commuter agencies across the country. As the *Wall Street Journal* reported on March 16,

... whatever the specific outcome, one group likely to be affected is the 800,000-plus non-Amtrak passengers a day who rely on Amtrak to get to and from work.

Many passengers don't realize it, but commuter trains from California to Illinois to Pennsylvania depend on Amtrak tracks, facilities or personnel for all or part of their trips.

... "They talk about shutting Amtrak, but the hurt would be on the commuter side," says Dale Zehner, chief executive of Virginia Rail Express...

"So what?" some conservatives might say. "Why should we care about public transportation? We all have cars. We drive to work. Transit's for losers, and we're not losers."

Many people, not just conservatives, think of public transportation as a smoke-belching bus, filled with poor people, lumbering slowly through the inner city. That perception is out of date. If we look at those commuter trains, which often depend on Amtrak tracks, crews, and dispatching, we see that the people riding them are people like us, middle or upper-middle class professionals who have cars and could drive but find the train more efficient. Even a Mercedes isn't much fun when it's stuck in traffic, and unless you're a woman, you probably find it difficult to read a brief, type on your laptop, and drive all at the same time. (I know, I left out eating breakfast and putting your face on.)

Illinois's Metra commuter rail system, which is probably the best in the country, provides a good example. Metra serves a six-county area surrounding Chicago. Eleven percent of commuters in those six counties who have incomes over \$75,000 commute by train. So do 8.5 percent of those with incomes between \$50,000 and \$75,000. Each day, more than 60,000 people with incomes over \$35,000 ride commuter trains in the area that Metra serves. Many of those people are conservatives; most of the representatives they send to Congress are Republicans. There is a real conservative constituency for public transit, made up of conservatives who actually use transit.

The key to understanding this phenomenon—use of transit by people who have plenty of money, usually more than

one car and could drive (they are called "riders from choice")—is the difference between buses and rail transit. Few riders from choice will choose to ride a bus, but many will ride a train. Again, a couple of the counties Metra serves show the story. In DuPage County, more than 15 percent of commuters with incomes over \$75,000 take the train. In Lake County, the figure is 13 percent. In the same counties, less than one-tenth of one percent of people with incomes over \$75,000 ride the bus. In Lake County, the mean earnings of rail commuters are more than \$76,000; the figure for bus riders is less than \$14,000. In fact, the mean earnings of rail commuters are more than double those of people driving to work alone. (All figures are from 1990 census data.)

So why are many conservatives opposed to transit, especially rail transit? (One of the constant refrains of anti-transit conservatives, who are really mostly libertarians, is "Buses are better than trains.") The answer lies in three widespread perceptions, all of which are wrong. First, conservatives believe public transportation is a government creation. In a pure free market, virtually all public transit would vanish as subsidies, which go only to transit, not cars, are eliminated and people turn to an inherently superior mode of travel, the automobile. Second, no conservatives use public transportation. (We've already seen that is not true of commuter trains.) And finally, transit does not serve any important conservative goals.