

# Militant about “Islamism”

Daniel Pipes wages “hand-to-hand combat” with a “totalitarian ideology.”

by JANET TASSEL

**R**ICHARD PIPES, Baird research professor of history, recounts in his recent book, *Vixi*, that when Daniel, his first child, was born in 1949, he felt as if he himself were being reborn. To mark the event he even quit smoking.

And, in a sense, with the birth of Daniel, Richard Pipes was indeed reborn, perhaps even cloned. Daniel '71, Ph.D. '78 (early Islamic history), is what old-timers would call a chip off the old block. Both are essentially loners, non-belongers (the subtitle of *Vixi* is *Memoirs of a Non-Belonger*), and fighters. Pipes the elder, the fiercely anti-communist cold-warrior, head of President Ford's Team B (formed to evaluate the CIA's estimates of Soviet nuclear intentions) and Soviet policy adviser to President Reagan, was cursed as a “wretched anti-Sovietist” by *Pravda*—and pretty well marginalized at Harvard for his politics.

In some ways Daniel, a specialist on Islam as an influence in history, is even more an outsider than his father. Founder and director of his own think tank, Middle East Forum (MEF), his current role in academe is gadfly. Though he taught world history from 1978 to 1982 at the University of Chicago, history at Harvard from 1983 to 1984, and policy strategy at the Naval War College from 1984 to 1986, he has parted ways with the academy—to the satisfaction of both, it seems. “I have the simple politics of a truck driver,” he told an interviewer, “not the complex ones of an academic. My viewpoint is not congenial with institutions of higher learning.” More congenial was his stint on the policy-planning staff at the State Department in 1983 and his seven years as director of a Philadelphia think tank called the Foreign Policy Research Institute, before starting Middle East Forum in 1994.

At Middle East Forum, he is publisher of *Middle East Quarterly*, which he says, “seeks out voices excluded from the scholarly debate, voices more aligned with the pro-American views of mainstream Americans.” And he has initiated Campus Watch, a website and speakers' bureau that monitors Middle Eastern studies

*“It is a mistake to blame Islam, a religion 14 centuries old, for the evil that should be ascribed to militant Islam, a totalitarian ideology less than a century old. Militant Islam is the problem, but moderate Islam is the solution.”*

~DANIEL PIPES

at North American universities—“a kind of *Consumer Reports*,” he says, “for students, parents, alumni, and legislators” to air perceived biases and inaccuracies. This is yet another irritant to critics like Rashid Khalidi, Said professor of Arab studies and director of the Middle East Institute at Columbia University, who calls the Campus Watchers “intellectual thugs”; Juan Cole, professor of history at the University of Michigan, deems the project “cyberstalking.” “Crude Mc-

Carthyism” and “totalitarianism” are among the less vitriolic terms used by other scholars to describe Campus Watch. In addition, Pipes is now in his final year as a director of the federally funded U.S. Institute of Peace.

The author of 12 books, Pipes churns out newspaper columns and weblogs at a dizzying rate. His website receives about 50,000 visits each week. He calls his work “applied scholarship.” “Just as technology is applied science, in my case applied scholarship is applied history; having studied the history, religion, culture, and languages, I interpret what's taking place right now through these prisms.” In his case, applied scholarship is the weapon for what he calls “hand-to-hand combat” with militant Islam (or radical Islam, Wahhabism, or Islamism, terms he uses interchangeably)—a “true successor,” in his words, of fascism and his father's nemesis, communism.

This might be the place for one of Pipes's definitions of the adversary, a virtual catalog of frights:

Militant Islam derives from Islam but is a misanthropic, misogynist, triumphalist, millenarian, anti-modern, anti-Christian, anti-Semitic, terroristic, jihadist, and suicidal version of it. Fortunately, it appeals to only about 10 percent to 15 percent of Muslims, meaning that a substantial majority would prefer a more moderate version.

Nevertheless, this “totalitarian ideology,” even with “only” 10 to 15 percent signed on (roughly 100 to 150 million persons worldwide), “regards itself as the only rival, and the inevitable successor, to Western civilization.” To many people this is scary stuff. But such warnings are his specialty. Among his many dis-



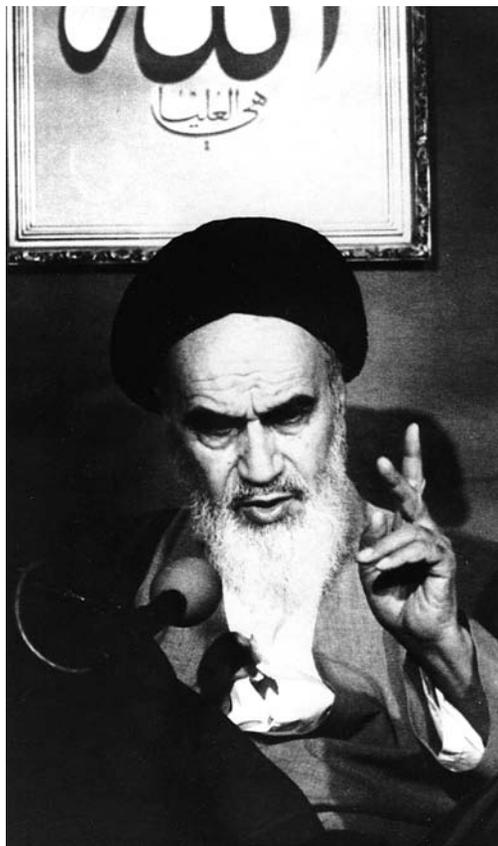
quieting predictions, he wrote, as early as March 1994:

From [an American] point of view, the Middle East increasingly stands out as a region that develops and exports problems, including political radicals, terrorism, drugs, unconventional weaponry, and conspiracy theories. We should recognize that this region resembles the Pacific rim less than it does Africa; and we should ready ourselves for the many troubles yet to come.

So dedicated is Pipes to his self-appointed task—and such a workhorse—that his parents complain they never see him except on television. When asked how they feel about their son's single-minded determination, they imply it was predictable, describing his boyhood as that of a pensive, overachieving bookworm. Yet Pipes senior recalls, “When Daniel was in high school and his first years in college, he had no political interests at all. He was going to be a mathematician; his real passion was for playing chess. I remember, during the Vietnam War, when he

was at Harvard, he came to see me and said, ‘Dad, what is all this problem? Why are these people demonstrating?’ Well, President Pusey, who retired just about the time Daniel graduated, told me to tell him it was okay to be concerned, because he was in the worst class in the history of Harvard.”

ONE'S FIRST IMPRESSION of Daniel Pipes today completely belies the nerdy stereotype. Tall, dashing, and trim-bearded, he seems straight from central casting for Mozart's *Don Giovanni* or Boito's *Mefistofele*. Instead of a sonorous bass to match the Lotharian looks, however, he speaks in a voice that barely registers on a tape recorder. He greets the visitor in his attractive, tenth-floor corner office in downtown Philadelphia, where smaller offices buzz with busy interns and associates. Middle East Forum, with its staff of 15, has an annual budget of about \$1 million; among its donors are Robert Guzzardi, Lawrence Kadish, Nina Rosenwald (American Securities, L.P.) and institutions such as the Bradley



**Ayatollah Khomeini, shown here in 1980 assailing the Israeli occupation of Palestine, sparked Pipes's interest in contemporary affairs.**

Foundation. Its mission, according to its website ([www.meforum.org](http://www.meforum.org)), is to “define and promote American interests in the Middle East,” including strengthening this nation’s ties with Israel and Turkey, “and other democracies as they emerge”; working “for human rights throughout the region”; seeking a “stable supply and a low price of oil”; and promoting “the peaceful settlement of regional and international disputes.”

Married (twice), with three daughters, Pipes grew up steeped in Harvard and Harvard-related traditions—he even attended the now-defunct Harvard pre-school, in Quonset huts on Linnæan Street. After a private-school education,

including studies abroad, it was on to Harvard College.

Harvard, he feels, let him down. “I didn’t change,” he says. “I entered one university, a traditional one, and graduated from something grotesquely different.” No “neocon” he: “I was always a conservative; it’s just that, as my father said, politics didn’t mean that much to me. But by 1968, politics had become dominant. In April ’69, my sophomore year, came the occupation of University Hall, which was a searing event, an event which dominated all our lives. I have chilling memories of that entire period, and of being always among the very few, swimming against the tide. Those decisions of whether or not to go to meals and classes we’d paid for, and being in a very small minority, caused me to ask myself all the time, ‘What’s wrong with me? Why am I not in agreement with everyone else?’ And those endless arguments:

**“Whereas the closest parallels to Islam are Judaism and Christianity, those closest to Islamism are other radical utopian ‘isms,’ namely fascism and Marxism-Leninism.”**

before the University Hall bust, I had a social life with people I disagreed with. After that, it just wasn’t possible, the rifts were too deep. I found myself rather isolated.”

Perhaps all this readied him for the life change that came next. “I’d studied math my first two years of college—Math 11 and 55, if memory serves, the hot-shot math classes. But I wasn’t smart enough. So I chose to become a historian. I’d traveled in the Sahara in ’68, and toyed with some romantic notions of studying the trades and peoples of the desert. Then, I was in the Sinai in 1969, and made up my mind I had to learn Arabic. When I re-

turned to college, I took every course on the Middle East that I could, including an anthropology independent study on peoples of the Sahara with the legendary Carleton Coon. My senior thesis was ‘A Medieval Islamic Debate: The World Created in Eternity,’ a study of al-Ghazali” [Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1050-1111), a key Islamic philosopher, theologian, and mystic].

And the life change? “After graduation, I spent a couple of years in Egypt. UC-Berkeley ran a program in Cairo that initially took me there. I intended to go on to Lebanon, but Cairo completely absorbed me, so I stayed put. In a sense everything I’m doing is an offshoot of my experience living in Egypt, three years in all. I studied Arabic in various institutions and also spent time on my own—learning the language, learning the society, reading. I lived for some months with a family and spent a lot of time roaming the city, immersing myself in the culture. But then, just as I got my Ph.D. in ’78 on Islam’s role in public life [his dissertation became his first book, *Slave Soldiers and Islam* (1981)], Khomeini was emerging in Iran. The tremendous interest in Khomeini and Khomeinism presented me with an opportunity to apply what I knew to current events.”

Thus began his efforts to publicize the rise and perceived dangers of militant Islam. In a profusion of books and articles, Pipes set out to prove, as he writes in his book *Miniatures* (a collection of essays, many well preceding September 2001), that Islamism’s war on America, far from having begun on that day, “began in November 1979, not long after Ayatollah Khomeini rode the slogan ‘Death to America’ to power. And sure enough, the attacks on Americans soon began.” *In the Path of God*, first published in 1983, traces the connection between Islam and politics through 14 centuries of flowering and decline and, most relevant to the present crisis, Islamic responses to Western ideologies. Other book topics range from Syrian politics to the Rushdie affair and, in *Militant Islam Reaches America*, he brings us up to recent times—provocatively. For example, in a chapter devoted to the question, “Does poverty cause militant Islam?” he raises the possibility that Islamism, “quite contrarily,...results from wealth.”

How does it happen that this gentle-voiced scholar has become so controversial? Partly, of course, it comes with the territory: in an academic field known for heated, bare-knuckled controversy, Pipes, as a Jewish conservative working from the outside, has chosen to make himself one of the most vehement contributors, finding himself on the right, which is to say the wrong, side

of every issue—at least in the eyes of much of the press and academia. And, not least, he is often tarred with the catchall brush of misattribution—accused of saying what he

hasn’t. Despite his endlessly repeated mantra—“Militant Islam is the problem and moderate Islam the solution”—he is charged with being an Islamophobe. But in his own words:

Not being a Muslim, I by definition do not believe in the mission of the Prophet Muhammad; but I have enormous respect for the faith of those who do. I note how deeply rewarding Muslims find Islam as well as the extraordinary inner strength it imbues them with. Having studied the history and civilization of the classical period, I am vividly aware of the great Muslim cultural achievements...

I approach the religion of Islam in a neutral fashion, neither praising it nor attacking it but in a spirit of inquiry. Neither apologist nor booster, neither spokesman nor critic, I consider myself a student of this subject.

However, “though neutral on Islam,” he continues, “I take a strong stand on Islamism, which I see as very different....Whereas the closest parallels to Islam are Judaism and Christianity, those closest to Islamism are other radical utopian ‘isms,’ namely fascism and Marxism-Leninism. Islamism is a scourge, a global affliction whose victims include peoples of all religions, [but] Muslims are the main casualties....Moderate Muslims who wish to live modern lives, unencumbered by burqas, fatwas, and violent visions of jihad, are on the defensive and atomized. They must be helped: celebrated by governments, publicized in the media, given grants by foundations.” Many of Pipes’s articles deal with the plight of moderate voices in Islam, and he says MEF is in the process of helping form an anti-Islamist Muslim organization.

Nonetheless, Pipes has a knack for arousing bilious emotions. A world-class free-for-all was detonated in the spring of 2003 when President Bush nominated him to the board of the U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP), a rather obscure deliberative body, a nomination requiring Senate approval. What happened?

The *Washington Post* editorialized that the nomination was a “cruel joke,” pointing out that the institute was supposed to be working on a special initiative to create a bridge between cultures, but “Mr. Pipes has long been regarded by Muslims as a destroyer of such bridges.” The Arab American Institute, an activist policy organization headed by James Zogby, released a statement saying, in part, “For decades Daniel Pipes has displayed a bizarre obsession with all things Arab and Muslim. Now, it appears that his years of hatred and bigotry have paid off with a presidential appointment. One shudders to think how he will abuse this position to tear at the fabric of our nation.” Juan Cole blogged, “I urge academics and others to boycott the United States Institute for Peace this year, as long as extremist ideologue Daniel Pipes serves on it.” But by far the most acrimonious sustained attack came from the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR). The *New Republic* reported:

Go to the [CAIR] website...and you will see an urgent call to “Act Now! Ask Senate to reject the Daniel Pipes Nomination.” Elsewhere on the site, another “Action Alert” beckons you to ask the president “to rescind nomination of ‘Islamophobe’”

Robert Spencer, author of several books on Islam, and director of the websites Jihad Watch and Dhimmi Watch, did go to the CAIR website and called it a “lynching.” According to a *Wall Street Journal* editorial,

In fighting the war on terror, it would be nice to think there is a role for one of the few U.S. scholars to warn of the danger from militant Islam in advance of September 11. Instead, the nomination of Mideast scholar Daniel Pipes to the board of the U.S. Institute of Peace has turned into one of the nastier confirmation battles of the Bush Presidency....For years Mr. Pipes has been raising the alarm about Islamic terrorist organizations operating in the U.S....After 9/11 he made the obvious point that the best hiding place for radical Muslims in the U.S. would be in moderate Muslim communities and in mosques. He favors “profiling,” which is to say paying more attention at airports to young Arab men than to American grandmothers....For these insights, Mr. Pipes is now being dubbed a “racist” and a “bigot”...The Council on American-Islamic Relations is leading the charge, calling Mr. Pipes’s appointment “a slap in the face to all those who seek to build bridges of understanding between people of faith.”

## Questions for a Friend

*Adapted from an article by Pipes that ran in the Jerusalem Post on November 26, 2003*

**I**F MILITANT ISLAM is the problem and moderate Islam is the solution, as I often argue, how does one differentiate between these two forms of Islam?

It is often useful to ask questions. Such questions might include:

**Violence:** Do you condone or condemn the Palestinians, Chechens, and Kashmiris who give up their lives to kill enemy civilians? Will you condemn by name as terrorist groups such organizations as Abu Sayyaf, Al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya, Group Islamique Armée, Hamas, Harakat ul-Mujahidin, Hizbullah, Islamic Jihad, Jaish e-Mohammed, Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, and al-Qaida?

**Modernity:** Should Muslim women have equal rights with men (for example, in inheritance shares or court testimony)? Is jihad, meaning a form of warfare, acceptable in today’s world? Do you accept the validity of other religions? Do Muslims have anything to learn from the West?

**Secularism:** Should non-Muslims enjoy completely equal civil rights with Muslims? May Muslims convert to other religions? May Muslim women marry non-Muslim men? Do you accept the laws of a majority non-Muslim government and unreservedly pledge allegiance to that government? Should the state impose religious observance, such as banning food service during Ramadan? When Islamic customs conflict with secular laws...which should give way?

**Islamic Pluralism:** Are Sufis and Shi’ites fully legitimate Muslims? Do you see Muslims who disagree with you as having fallen into unbelief? Is *takfir* (condemning fellow Muslims with whom one has disagreements as unbelievers) an acceptable practice?

**Self-criticism:** Do you accept the legitimacy of scholarly inquiry into the origins of Islam? Who was responsible for the 9/11 suicide hijackings?

**Defense against militant Islam:** Do you accept enhanced security measures to fight militant Islam, even if this means extra scrutiny of yourself? Do you agree that institutions accused of funding terrorism should be shut down?

**Goals in the West:** Do you accept that Western countries are majority-Christian and secular or do you seek to transform them into majority-Muslim countries ruled by Islamic law?

These questions offer a good start to the vexing issue of separating enemy from friend.



The final Friday prayers of Ramadan in Rawalpindi, Pakistan—one of the world's principal Muslim nations—this past November

Professor of international relations Akbar Ahmed, Ibn Khaldun chair of Islamic studies at American University, asked, in the *Religion News Service* in July, “Who is better placed to act as a bridge than the scholar of Islam?” and continued, “Responding to criticism or implied criticism with threats is not a convincing way in which to present a counter-argument.”

Pakistani American Tashbih Sayyed, editor of the *Muslim World Today* and of the *Pakistan Times*, called Pipes “a Cassandra. He must be listened to. If there is no Daniel Pipes, there is no source for America to learn to recognize the evil which threatens it. Historians will write later that Pipes saved us. There are Muslims in America that are like Samson; they have come into the temple to pull down the pillars, even if it means destroying themselves.” According to Sheikh Dr. Ahmed Subhy

Mansour, a former visiting fellow in the human-rights program at Harvard Law School, “We Muslims need a thinker like Dr. Pipes, who can criticize the terrorist culture within Islam, just as I usually do.” (Sheikh Mansour, an exile, taught for many years at Al-Azhar University in Egypt, until he was fired and imprisoned for his pro-American and human-rights activism.)

The upshot of the spirited battle—joined by other intellectuals, journalists, and the public—was that when Congress adjourned, President Bush named Pipes to the Institute as a recess appointment.

Pipes, in his office, says that despite the huge outpouring of support, the experience of being “borked by the likes of Senator Kennedy as ‘someone not committed to bridging differences’ remains painful. My career,” he says, “has been exactly devoted to bridging differences. But you can’t bridge them until you define them. My whole point has always been that it is a huge mistake to lump all Muslims on the side of militant Islam. Indeed, anti-Islamist Muslims are the first victims of this radical movement, and to ignore them and what they can bring is a terrible mistake.”

The true obstacle to bridging differences in the United States, he repeats, is Islamism, principally its “worst, most aggressive, and most prominent” practitioner, CAIR. “CAIR and I are engaged in an effort of mutual delegitimation, and it gets vicious. In 2000 they bought a website with my name [DanielPipes.com] and posted one calumny after another. [CAIR allowed the website to lapse after Pipes threatened legal action.] These lies were reprinted in various Muslim publications, and I got barrages of hate mail, including threats.” CAIR, he asserts, “tries to present itself as a civil-rights group, the Muslim equivalent of the NAACP. But CAIR, with Saudi financing, is the attack dog of Islamist institutions in the United States. CAIR has two primary goals: to help build Hamas against Israel and to promote militant Islam’s agenda here. Its people are all over the place, extremely active, but they are the totalitarians among us, the front for the enemy in this country, and they should be shunned, as David Duke or Louis Farrakhan is shunned.” In fact, three CAIR staff members—Ismail Royer, Ghasan Elashi, and Bassem Khafagi—have been convicted on mail fraud and terrorism-related charges.

ANUJIA VEERA/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Still, it must be admitted that Pipes seems to relish his function as spoiler. Since his contentious appointment to the USIP, he has published broadsides against, among other government agencies, the FBI—for cozying up to various terror-friendly individuals and groups, like the now-defunct American Muslim Council and its “slick, smooth-talking” founder, Abdurahman Alamoudi, now in prison for numerous terror-related activities;

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the State Department—for promoting on its website Palestinian nationalism; and the Department of Defense—for its occasional laxity, for example, in not monitoring the actions of Muslim chaplains in the military.

## Pipes's Partner

NO STUDY OF DANIEL PIPES would be complete without a few words about the trenchant Martin Kramer, a fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and former editor of Pipes's *Middle East Quarterly*, who earned his undergraduate and doctoral degrees from Princeton, where he studied with Dodge professor (now emeritus) Bernard Lewis. For both Kramer and Pipes, Lewis is the greatest twentieth-century representative of the group of Jewish scholars who "played a key role in the development of an objective, nonpolemical, and positive evaluation of Islamic civilization," to use Lewis's own words, someone far above what Pipes calls the "postmodern practice of stuffing the complexities of political science and history into bottles labeled race, gender, and class" characterizing the current field.

In his 2001 book, *Ivory Towers on Sand*, Kramer launches a withering attack on the Middle East Studies Association (MESA), asserting that there were acknowledged problems with competency and standards from its very inception, in 1966—indeed, as far back as 1955, when Sir Hamilton Gibb was brought in to head the new Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard. Gibb, who "had wanted to bring Oriental studies and the social sciences together," later lamented:

...it was not long before I realized how inchoate, indeed how naïve, all my previous ideas had been, in face of the actual problems involved in developing a programme of area studies that could stand up to the high standards demanded by the Harvard Faculty—and equally so to the best academic standards in this country.

"To speak plainly," said Gibb, "there just are not yet enough fully-qualified specialists in any of the required fields to go round." "When Gibb departed in 1964," writes Kramer, "Harvard's center nearly folded, and for years it relied upon visiting faculty. Harvard tolerated its Middle East center (it brought in money), but never respected it."

It was the Arab-Israeli conflict in June 1967 that ignited what Kramer describes as the deepening politicization, the

substitution of indoctrination for scholarship, and the Arab-Israel obsession that debilitated MESA. William Brinner, a Berkeley historian, saw it, and warned in his 1970 presidential address: "We do not seek an end to controversy, but we must realize that the price we will pay for political involvement is the destruction of this young Association and the disappearance of a precious meeting place of ideas." And in 1974, the University of Chicago's Leonard Binder, in his presidential address to MESA, cautioned: "Some day peace may break out, and then people will cease to be willing to pay us to tell them what they want to hear. What will we then do if we have no scholarly standing?"

But the *coup de grâce* for Middle Eastern studies, Kramer asserts, was delivered by Edward Said, the late Palestinian-American critic and University Professor and professor of English and comparative literature at Columbia, in his 1978 book *Orientalism*. Said, writes Kramer,

situated the Palestinians in a much wider context. They were but the latest victims of a deep-seated prejudice against the Arabs, Islam, and the East more generally—a prejudice so systematic and coherent that it deserved to be described as "Orientalism," the intellectual and moral equivalent of anti-Semitism. Until Said, orientalism was generally understood to refer to academic Oriental studies in the older, European tradition....Said resurrected and resemanticized the term, defining it as a supremacist ideology of difference, articulated in the West to justify its dominion over the East.

"The decadence that pervades Middle Eastern studies today," wrote Kramer, "the complete subservience to trendy politics, and the unlikelihood that the field might ever again produce a hero of high culture—all this is owed to Edward Said."

It didn't take long for "Orientalist" to become a nasty word in Middle Eastern studies circles, as, for example, when Said himself, writing in *Counterpunch* in June 2003, referred to "Nanderthal publicists and Orientalists like Bernard Lewis and Daniel Pipes." To which Pipes responded a day or two later, "How impressive to be called an Orientalist by the person who transformed this honorable old term into an insult."

He has even set pen to paper against the USIP itself, which last March, over his "strenuous objections," cosponsored a workshop with the Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy—"a radical Islamic group," according to Pipes, one of whose fellows is Kamran Bokhari, who, he says, "served for years as the North American spokesman for Al-Muhajiroun, perhaps the most extreme Islamist group operating in the West." Another invited guest was Muzammil Siddiqi, "who until November 2001 was president of the Islamic Society of North America, a Wahhabi front group." Pipes did not attend and went public in a column in the *New York Sun*.

FOR PEOPLE LIKE PIPES, bluntness trumps diplomacy. Khaleel Mohammed, assistant professor of religious studies at San Diego State University, says he has the same problem. In an e-mail about Pipes, he writes, "I feel...that his undiplomatic language will cause angry reaction. I wrote DP about this, and he was kind

enough to ask me how could he say things differently, given the material he deals with. I had no answer, since I am afraid that I belong to the same category." For such people, words mean what they are supposed to mean. Pipes objects to the phrase "war on terrorism," for example. "Terrorism is a tactic," he says. "You don't go to war against a tactic. We must be specific: we are at war with militant Islam, not 'terrorism.'" Pipes hammered at this point for almost three years. Recently, the 9/11 Commission issued its report and virtually echoed his words. The enemy, it said, is "Islamist terrorism...not just 'terrorism,' some generic evil."

Then there was the brouhaha about the word "jihad" in a Harvard student's graduation speech in 2002. To many of Pipes's admirers, this was a windmill that didn't need tilting at. But he remains adamant.

The news that senior Zayed Yasin had been chosen to deliver a Commencement address entitled "My American Jihad" barely nine months after September 11 prompted Pipes to write: "Imag-

ine it's June 1942, soon after Hitler declared war on us. At Harvard University, a faculty committee has chosen a German-American to give one of three student orations at the festive commencement ceremony. He titles it 'American Kampf,' purposefully echoing the title of Hitler's book *Mein Kampf* ('My Struggle') in order to show the positive side of 'Kampf.'"

Indeed, the purpose of the speech, according to Yasin, a past president of the Harvard Islamic Society, was to "reclaim the word for its true meaning, which is 'inner struggle.'" In his address, he said,

Jihad, in its truest and purest form, the form to which all Muslims aspire, is the determination to do right, to do justice even against your own interests. It is an individual struggle for personal moral behavior. Especially today, it is a struggle that exists on many levels: self-purification and awareness, public service, and social justice.

This was altogether too much for Pipes, though he blamed the student less than the faculty. In a scathing article for *Commentary*, "Jihad and the Professors," he reported that a survey he made of media comments by some two dozen academics had turned up definitions ranging from "a struggle against our own myopia and neglect" to "resisting apartheid or working for women's rights." For example, he quoted David Mitten, Loeb professor of classical art and archaeology, a convert to Islam and faculty adviser to the Harvard Islamic Society, as saying that true jihad is "the constant struggle of Muslims to conquer their inner base instincts, to follow the path to God, and to do good in society." Three years later, Mitten says, "Sure. I'll stand by that quote. This is what is called greater jihad, dating to the eleventh century, and is superior to lesser or militaristic jihad, extracted by Osama and Zarqawi for their own dastardly purposes. We knew Zayid's speech would

be controversial; the word is inflammatory, but he wanted people to understand the real meaning of greater jihad."

"But of course," Pipes erupted in his article, "it is precisely bin Laden, Islamic Jihad, and the jihadists worldwide who define the term, not a covey of academic apologists. More importantly, the way the jihadists understand the term is in keeping with its usage through fourteen centuries of Islamic history."

And that definition, he continued, to the majority of Muslims meant, and means, "the legal, compulsory, communal effort to expand the territories ruled by Muslims (known in Arabic as *dar al-Islam*) at the expense of territories ruled by non-Muslims (*dar al-harb*)." Khaleel Mohammed agrees. "The normative meaning has become war—whether expansionist or defensive," he writes. "The academic professors at Harvard, et cetera, often confuse their Islamica and their political thought." Tashbih Sayyed goes even further: "When the apologists talk about greater jihad or lesser jihad, they are basically playing with words. If it is so and jihad is good deeds or good thoughts, then why do they never call their thinkers *mujahadin*, holy warriors? Why are only those people who wage war with swords and behead non-Muslims glorified as *mujahadin*?"

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Pipes does acknowledge the concept of greater or higher jihad, which he says is usually associated with Sufism and with the reformist approach to Islam that "reinterpret[s] Islam to make it compatible with Western ways." But he calls this approach "wholly apologetic," owing "far more to Western than to Islamic thinking."

In his book *In the Path of God*, we read more about reformism's reinterpretation of Qur'anic precepts involving women, sex, the family, taxes, and slavery; and are told that reformists "de-emphasize the traditional understanding of jihad as a call to arms, preferring to interpret it instead as a call to personal redemption." But:

The reformist assumption that Islam includes or anticipates all that is attractive in Western civilization facilitates the borrowing of new ideas; in a sense, the whole reformist enterprise is designed to disguise

**In an Islamic Jihad videotape, three Palestinians pose before their attack on Israeli soldiers in the Gaza Strip last September; three soldiers, and these gunmen, died in the assault.**



AFFGETTY IMAGES

the adoption of Western principles. Not acknowledging this source makes [the new ideas] that much more palatable. But dissimulation has a price; by portraying the Qu'ran, the Shari'a [Muslim sacred law], and the Islamic heritage as liberal, violence is done to them. The falseness of this argument dooms it to sterility.

Pipes then quotes Sir Hamilton Gibb, founder in the mid 1950s of Harvard's Center for Middle Eastern Studies (CMES), who "severely but justly characterized reformist thinking as mired in 'intellectual confusions and paralyzing romanticism.'"

Pipes finally relents a bit, saying "that insofar as reformist thought allows Muslims to come to terms with Western realities by easing their acceptance, it helps them, even if its logic is faulty and its facts distorted." But, as he says in his office, "'Jihad' is a word that is being used by true jihadists even as we speak, to threaten us all. If reformist Muslims are willing to undertake the long, hard work to change the millennium-old meaning of the word, well, that would be a great development. My real problem is with this academic dissimulating, pretending that the word doesn't mean what it has always meant."

**A**S ALREADY NOTED, Pipes has not exactly endeared himself to academia, but, he maintains, it can't be helped. Trouble is, as this sample of his rhetoric from the *New York Post* asserts, "Middle East studies have become an intellectual Enron. Scholars of the Middle East" are

*Incompetent:* They consistently get the basics wrong. Militant Islam they portray as a democratizing force. Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda they dismiss as irrelevant. The Palestinian Authority they predict to be democratic. So wrong so consistently are the academics that government officials have largely stopped asking them for advice.

*Adversarial:* Many American scholars are hostile to U.S. national interests. Thus, the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) board has recommended that its members "not seek or accept" U.S. government funded scholarships. That three specialists [all at the University of South Florida] were recently indicted on terrorism charges caused no alarm among their colleagues.

*Intolerant:* The field is hobbled by political uniformity and an unwillingness to permit alternate viewpoints. In one infamous case at Berkeley, the section leader of a course on Palestinian poetics made this bias explicit in the course catalog ("Conservative thinkers are encouraged to seek other sections").

*Apologetic:* Specialists generally avoid subjects that reflect poorly on their region, such as repression in Saddam Hussein's Iraq, Muslim anti-Semitism and chattel slavery in Sudan. The MESA president recently discouraged studying what he called "terrorology"....

*Abusive:* Specialists too often coerce students into regurgitating a party line and penalize freethinkers with lower grades.

A particular delinquency, he argues, is the endemic anti-Israel stance of Middle Eastern studies. When the *Salient*, Harvard's conservative undergraduate biweekly, asked Pipes in the fall of 2002 about anti-Semitism at Harvard, he responded, "I see anti-Semitism as one unhappy consequence of the failure of Middle Eastern studies. At Campus Watch, our premise is that profes-



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**Indonesian Muslim protesters assail the United States in a September 2002 demonstration.**

sors of Middle Eastern studies are doing a poor job. They are contributing to the tension of the Israeli-Palestinian discourse on campus and are thus a factor in the growth of anti-Semitism."

Some of Pipes's foes on the left, like Juan Coles of the University of Michigan, for example, accuse him of being a front of some kind for Israel, "censoring" academics "for daring to speak out against Ariel Sharon's odious predations in Palestine." In fact, Pipes and Middle East Forum have no formal agenda concerning Israel beyond believing in "strong ties" with that democracy (according to the MEF website). Though he has visited Israel on numerous occasions, Pipes doesn't know Hebrew. Moreover, he is a sort of equal-opportunity critic. In one recent article, "Israel's Wayward Prime Ministers," he managed to lambast the four most recent Israeli prime ministers, including Sharon, accusing them all, each in his own way, of duplicity, grandiosity, egoism, immodesty, and—worst of all—weakness.

**N**OW IT SO HAPPENS that Pipes himself, whose Ph.D. was done in connection with CMES, had what he calls "a very good experience." His adviser, he relates, "was the late Joseph Fletcher, who died in his mid 40s, a few years after I got my degree—an extraordinary linguist and historian with a vision of the grand sweep of history." But today, he says, the field in gen-



An anti-America, anti-Israel rally in Tehran, August 2001

eral remains a bastion of anti-Israeli and anti-American hostility and left-leaning multiculturalism.

Susan Kahn, Ph.D. '97, associate director of CMES and director of its master's program, objects. "The Center," she says, "isn't one way or the other. There is no political agenda, no party line. One could certainly make the argument that nothing is politics-free, but our goal is to make sure our students have access to the best quality education. Our primary faculty have a variety of backgrounds. My scholarship is about Israel and the anthropology of

**"I do not want to comment on him or the unholy crusade he is embarked on."**

Jewish communities; others are associated with history, art and architecture, languages. In our meetings at least, we keep the Arab-Israeli problem off the table."

William Granara, professor of the practice of Arabic, who compares Pipes with the late Senator Joseph McCarthy and even the Inquisition, agrees with Kahn: "We're politicized in the sense that our whole area is politicized. It reminds me of the 1960s. People who were in East Asian studies were always being accused of being pro-this government or anti-that government. To be in East Asian studies in the 1960s and not have a political opinion would be rare." Granara differs from Pipes, too, in his evaluation of the weakened state of Middle Eastern studies. Area studies in general, as an organizing principle, he says, "has run its course. If it is dying, it's dying a natural death." Then he comes up with a paradox: "It failed because it was a success. What Middle Eastern area studies did is to make scholars in our field go back to their disciplines. Historians of the Middle East are no longer in Middle East studies departments, they've gone back into history departments. Political scientists have returned to political science. And so on. Area studies has exhausted itself because it has done its job."

Granara does admit that "there is no doubt there is a significant number of people in Middle Eastern studies who are sympathetic toward the Arab cause. This is a reality. But it's a sympa-

thy that is not founded on ignorance or hatred or prejudice. It's founded on acquired knowledge."

The attitudes toward Pipes at CMES vary, from silence—many would not speak for the record—to thunder. William A. Graham, O'Brien professor of divinity and Albertson professor of Middle Eastern studies as well as dean of the Divinity School, would say only, "I do not want to comment on him or the unholy crusade he is embarked on."

A major feature of that "crusade" would undoubtedly be Pipes's insistence that Middle Eastern studies be essentially defunded of public monies. He would "zero-out all government allocations for area studies. This step would barely affect the study of foreign cultures at universities, as the \$100 million in federal money amounts to just 10 percent of the budget at most major centers—funds

those centers could undoubtedly raise from private sources. But doing this would send the salutary message that the American taxpayer no longer wishes to pay for substandard work."

Granara strenuously disagrees. "I'm one of those people—children of FLAS [Foreign Language Area Studies]—who got federal money to learn Arabic," he says. (Pipes, too, is a "child of FLAS," having received a fellowship, in 1974-76.) "Because of the money the government has put in," Granara explains, "I think you can say very solidly that we teach Arabic and Persian and Turkish and Hebrew much better than we did 20 years ago; we train better historians, anthropologists, scholars of literature." And if the funding ceases? "Then we're going back to leaving the field to the very few people who are really interested in a political agenda."

Another effort that Pipes supports, a possible substitute for defunding, is a piece of legislation that calls for the creation of an advisory board to review the way in which the annual \$95 million to \$100 million is spent under Title VI of the Higher Education Act, and to ensure that area-studies programs "reflect diverse perspectives and the full range of views of world regions, foreign languages, and international affairs."

Such a board is needed, he wrote earlier this year, because "Middle East studies are a failed field and the academics who consume these funds also happen to allocate them—a classic case of unaccountability. The purpose of this subsidy, which Congress increased by 26 percent after 9/11, is to help the American government with exotic language and cultural skills. Yet many universities reject this role, dismissing it as training 'spies.'"

Thus it is understandable that in her soul-searching 2003 presidential address to MESA, in which she discusses the reasons the field of Middle East studies is "not reproducing itself," Lisa Anderson, dean of Columbia's School of International and Public Affairs (an assistant professor of government and social studies at Harvard in the 1980s), mentioned of the year's developments that the desire to appeal to bigotry and intolerance while simultaneously disavowing it was widespread. During the summer Congressional recess, the Bush Administration appointed a conservative polemicist, Daniel Pipes, to the

board of the government-funded United States Institute of Peace, thereby avoiding what would have been tendentious hearings exploring widespread complaints about his anti-Muslim bias.

Nor could she find any rationale for a “plan to monitor and evaluate the universities and their studies programs,”

which is not about diversity, or even about truth, but about the conviction of conservative political activists that the American university community is insufficiently patriotic, or perhaps simply insufficiently conservative....Policy advocates and polemicists who wish to dictate the range of respectable political conclusions now pose a serious threat to our scholarly integrity. Self-appointed guardians of the academy now use websites like Campus Watch to “invite student complaints of abuse, investigate their claims, and (when warranted) make these known,” presumably to university presidents.

Anderson expresses her concern about threats to safety, often Muslim versus Muslim, in Iran, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. Elsewhere, she says:

Ordinary routines at other universities in the region were disrupted...: the vicious politics of the Israel-Palestine conflict led to a bombing at Hebrew University, the temporary closing of access to Bir Zeit University, and the routine harassment of students and faculty at Bir Zeit and al-Quds Universities.

“ROUTINE HARASSMENT” is an integral part of Pipes’s daily life as well. As he writes:

The Campus Watch staff lectured at 48 educational institutions during the past academic year, offering a rare break from one-sided presentations of the Middle East. Unhappily, our presence so inflamed the opposition that bodyguards, metal detectors and, in one memorable instance [at York University in Toronto], mounted police were required to insure our right to speak.

Cinnamon Stillwell, a writer for the self-described media watchdog and conservative news organization Chronwatch.com. in San Francisco, attended a lecture Pipes gave in February 2004 at Berkeley, and reported:

If reaction to Daniel Pipes’ lecture on Tuesday was any indication, fascism is alive and well at UC Berkeley. Pipes was invited by the Israel Action Committee and Berkeley Hillel to speak at the college campus known for its leftist politics. But ironically, the home of “free speech” and “tolerance” has shown itself to be distinctly intolerant to those who express political views other than their own.

She goes on to describe the menacing street theater outside the building, orchestrated largely by the Muslim Student Association and Students for Justice in Palestine, the police, the private security team, the frisking, and the crowds inside. Chaos erupted

as soon as Pipes stepped up to the podium. In fact, before he’d spoken one word, someone had to be escorted outside because he wouldn’t calm down. Then jeering, giggling, hissing, booing, and finally the orchestrated chanting of “racist” and “Zionist” (among other things), started drown-

**In Gaza City, a Hamas militant brandishes a rocket-propelled grenade.**

ing out the lecture....The tension in the air was thick, tempers were rising, and yet amidst it all, Pipes kept his cool.

Are these face-offs worth the aggravation? Yes, says Pipes, it is part of his Campus Watch mission, and Campus Watch gets results, among them: “Pressuring Columbia University to the point that the president has organized a committee [to investigate] political intimidation in the classroom; getting the Center of Middle Eastern and North African Studies at the University of Michigan to remove links to a militant Islamic site; exposing the ties of a Florida Atlantic University instructor, Mustafa Abu Sway, to Hamas; preventing a neo-Nazi, William Baker, from speaking at campuses on behalf of militant Islamic groups.”

Of course, there is no denying that he thrives on this. And yet his friends worry about him, as do his parents. Richard Pipes admits, “Of course we’re worried. The Russians were more rational than the Muslims whom he confronts. They cared to live! But we are proud of him. Both of his courage and common sense. He understands the true nature of the danger the West faces.”

In *Vixi*, the senior Pipes wrote, “Those who called me a cold warrior apparently expected me to cringe. In fact, I accepted the title proudly.”

That could be Daniel himself speaking. ▽

*Contributing editor Janet Tassel profiled Biblical scholar James Kugel (“Final Architect”) in this magazine’s January-February 2004 issue.*



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