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Funding Anti-Americanism *Title VI and radicalism in Middle Eastern studies*

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“...an education based solely upon one-sided condemnations of American policy will fail to be effective...”

Since John Adams helped draft the Constitution of Massachusetts, which included Chapter V, Section II obligating the state to provide education to its citizens, the importance of an educated citizenry to democracy has never been in doubt. Relying upon the participation of educated and engaged citizens to fill the many jobs that composed each branch of federal and state government, it was vital to ensure the best and broadest range of education for each citizen. Following September 11, 2001 and the war in Iraq, federal lawmakers have indicated their need for citizens who are thoroughly educated in and possess great knowledge of the Middle East by increasing funding for Middle Eastern education programs from \$21.3 million in 2000 to \$30 million in 2003.

Title VI of the Higher Education Act provides funding and support for Middle Eastern educational programs, which stress “the study by Americans of foreign languages, as well as area and other international studies critical to strengthening our ability to ensure the nation’s security and economic competitiveness.” This funding, according to the testimony of Hoover Institution research fellow Stanley Kurtz before a hearing of the House Subcommittee on Select Education on June 19, tends to benefit programs that “purvey extreme and one-sided criticisms of American foreign policy.” This statement appears to be correct when one considers that Edward Said, Columbia University’s late revered theorist in Middle East area studies, once asserted that “the genocidal actions of...American leaders make Slobodan Milosevic himself look like a rank amateur in viciousness.” It is given further credence through Professor Joel Beinin’s belief that “it’s unfair to expect students and teachers to set aside their moral commitments or the way they identify emotionally with a topic when they enter the classroom,” coupled with his belief that, in the wake of September 11, 2001, Americans should realize, “The United States is not somehow uniquely protected from the consequences of its actions in the world.” Maintaining support for Title VI has now become difficult since it benefits programs and professors who aim not to educate, but instead to make ideologically pointed jeremiads while stifling opposing opinions.

Naturally, talk of monitoring what professors are teaching students in these programs has scared the academics who are most vocal and virulent in condemning the U.S. Already, professors, commentators and opponents of Kurtz have deemed his efforts and the efforts of his supporters as ‘McCarthyite,’ raising alarms of restrictions on academic freedom. They wish to portray themselves as wounded martyrs, suffering under the oppression of those who wish to silence any criticism of American foreign policy. Their struggle to maintain ideological imbalance will fail unless people remain afraid of speaking up against such imbalance out of a fear of being accused of censorship. The ‘restriction of academic freedom’ charade is further proved incorrect when

one realizes how little 'academic freedom' exists at institutions which employ professors who do not foster an environment of academic diversity.

Based upon the facts surrounding the current beneficiaries of Title VI money, Congress should, as Kurtz suggests, constitute a board to monitor Title VI allocations. This board would work to ensure that programs receiving federal money are ideologically balanced and, therefore, academically strong. This action assures critics of American foreign policy that they will not be silenced, but instead will only be rewarded with federal money when their programs are academically diverse. This strategy, though not welcomed by those professors loyal only to their ideological convictions, appears necessary if the United States hopes to ensure that those devising national security and foreign policy concerning the Middle East possess as much knowledge as possible.

Money for programs like Title VI originates from taxpayers who expect a return on their investment. In this situation, the return manifests itself not only in the education of those who wish to become professors, but also in those who wish to use their education to serve their country. Just as an education that is devoid of criticism of American foreign policy would provide students with an inaccurate view of world issues, an education based solely upon one-sided condemnations of American policy will fail to be effective while simultaneously hindering people from wanting to serve an "oppressive" American regime. This result violates the principles enunciated by the founding fathers, who saw the government's promise of education as vital to the continuity of a democratic republic.