

# Harvard's Un-American Activities

*The Salient speaks to Daniel Pipes of CampusWatch.org*

INTERVIEW OF DANIEL PIPES '71  
BY WILLIAM LEVINE

Recent happenings here at Harvard indicate a growing opposition — as though it were not large enough — of the university toward America's war on terrorism. The unconscionable decision to allow the commencement speech called "My American Jihad" — which whitewashed the real meaning of the term in favor of a mild vision of personal struggle — has now been followed by a faculty-signed petition against war on Iraq. As it has done all too often, the Harvard faculty, on practical matters, are blindly marching toward inconsequence. Unfortunately, Harvard is hardly the only American university suffering from this unpatriotic extremism. To hear an experienced perspective on Middle Eastern events, we spoke to

Daniel Pipes '71 (Ph.D. '78), director of the Middle East Forum and prize-winning columnist for the *New York Post* and *Jerusalem Post*. Recently he launched CampusWatch.org, which will monitor professors who propagate hatred and bias through the medium of Middle Eastern studies. The site currently lists fourteen universities, Harvard among them, that promote bias. Mr. Pipes was interviewed by William Levine, a staff writer for the *Harvard Salient*.

**THS:** *How has Harvard's collective view of the Middle East changed since you were a student here in the late 1960s and early 1970s?*

**Pipes:** I think there is a profound politicization now. When I was here, it was also a significant political issue, and there were many debates. But the study of the

Middle East was free of the current politics. I remember when I went into my first Arabic class feeling a sense of trepidation that I would be entering a context of disputation or argument, but thankfully that was not so. I did not get the sense then that all faculty and administration held to one politically correct point of view. The driving issue was instead the conflict between left and right; the Middle East was secondary.

**THS:** *What is your sense of the current climate at Harvard?*

**Pipes:** Though I am not at Harvard, I have a sense that today there is a reign of political correctness that showed its true face back in June with the "My American Jihad" commencement speech. The student who gave the speech is not nearly as worrying as the administration and faculty that endorsed it. The speech was not an original statement, but only derived from what the faculty has been saying. This amounts to duplicity, falsehood, and apologetics.

**THS:** *What do you think is the motivation for such apologetics?*

**Pipes:** I think there are different sources. Part of it is multiculturalism — an attempt to promote the cultures of other people while disparaging our own. Secondly, I see a rise in pro-Islamic apologetics.

**THS:** *What role would you prefer Harvard to play in the war on terror?*

**Pipes:** Until the Vietnam War, Harvard had always played the role of a patriotic institution. During Vietnam, Harvard, along with other educational institutions, transformed from a patriotic institution into an adversarial one. That adversarial culture has become the reigning outlook. Indeed, one student reporter asked me the other day whether it isn't in fact the natural role of the university to be adversarial — a question that showed me how profoundly presumed this role had become. And yet it is a radical change from prior history. There is no inherent reason that major universities must be at odds with the country as a whole, least of all in wartime. It is an assumption I contest. None of us agrees with the government all the time, yet the presumption should be that one lines up with one's country.

**THS:** *Can you talk about your new project called "Campus Watch" [<http://www.campus-watch.org/>] and, in particular, describe how Harvard came to be listed as one of fourteen schools that, according to Campus Watch, propagate hatred?*

**Pipes:** Well, Harvard made the list because of the commencement speech on jihad, which

was egregious and disgraceful. In many instances on the list, wayward professors are doing mischief on their own, but in Harvard's case it is the administration and faculty endorsing the obnoxious idea that jihad is a positive concept.

**THS:** *No Harvard professors were listed on your site. Is there a reason for that?*

**Pipes:** Two points. First, the site has just opened, and, as we move forward, Harvard professors will probably appear on it. Second, we have just changed the format to end the debate about "dossiers" and instead focus on substance. The information formerly in dossiers is now less emphasized — though it is still very much on the site.

**THS:** *Many professors have protested your site by contacting you and asking that their names be added to the list of professors named. What was your reaction to that?*

**Pipes:** First, it is puerile and unworthy of adults in positions of responsibility. Second, if those professors insist on being noted for their support of suicide bombing and militant Islam, we will grant them their wish and list them on the site.

**THS:** *What do you think about the notion that academia is dominated by people who think alike — in a politically correct manner — and that it is very difficult for people who share your views to break into academic circles?*

**Pipes:** I think that is the most profound change between when I was in school and now. A diversity of views did exist. No longer: now it is diversity of race and gender and class and nationality and religion — but not ideas, the only kind of diversity that counts at a university.

**THS:** *And what about the protests against the criticism of individual professors?*

**Pipes:** Such criticism is entirely appropriate. These are individuals who are in public life, lecturing, writing, and otherwise making their views known. That justifies public criticism as well. Professors tend to pat each other on the back, support each other, and therefore

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tend to spin off into irrelevance and extremism. We are coming out of the mainstream of American politics and saying to the Middle East specialists that they have a corporate culture in deep trouble. Specifically, they have a record of making errors, of intolerance to other viewpoints, of extremism, of apologetics, and of abusing their power over students.

**THS:** *Do you think that the views of these professors are having a tangible impact on American security and global security?*

**Pipes:** Yes, but not in the short term. Whether we engage in a military campaign against Iraq will not be decided by university demonstrations or by professors' statements. Nevertheless, the university is important. Obviously, it educates tomorrow's leaders. Also, the Middle East specialists play a real role in the war on terrorism, because it is to them that the country turns with its host of new questions about Islam. Who is going to answer them? Certainly not the government, and not the media either. It must be the specialists. And this is where they have failed so badly.

**THS:** *Could you give an example?*

**Pipes:** I have just finished a survey of more than twenty-five academics, including three at Harvard, to hear what they had to say about the word jihad, what it means. Some claimed

jihad can involve military force, but only defensively. Most did not refer to any military dimension, but — unbelievably — stated that jihad involves such efforts as controlling one's anger, working for feminism, or combating apartheid. This is an extraordinary failing, for jihad actually means expanding the realm of Muslim-controlled lands through military force. It is an offensive idea. The country needs to understand this word, and what it means when Osama bin Laden declares jihad on it. University specialists are not only failing to explain this, but they are actually deceiving the public.

**THS:** What were your thoughts when Presi-

dent Bush and others said, after September 11, that Islam was a "religion of peace"?

**Pipes:** Who are U.S. poli-

ticians to talk about Islam? They know too little and regularly get it wrong. And by the way, politicians normally stay a mile away from commenting on religion. When bombs go off in Northern Ireland, the president does not respond by declaring Catholicism a "religion of peace."

**THS:** Harvard president Lawrence Summers recently spoke to the fact that he believes that the pro-divestment, anti-Israeli movement is closely linked with anti-Semitism. What are your thoughts on that?

**Pipes:** I see anti-Semitism as one unhappy consequence of the failure of Middle Eastern studies. At Campus Watch, our premise is that professors 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. Our role is less to address the consequences and more to deal with the causes. We want to monitor, critique, and improve Middle Eastern studies. We believe this will have a variety of beneficial results for the university, for students in particular, and for the country as a whole.

**THS:** How do you think the possible war against Iraq would affect the Middle East?

**Pipes:** Very favorably. This hideous regime in Baghdad is having a bad effect on the whole region. Its end will have many happy consequences for Iraq, first of all, and for Iran, Syria, Kuwait, and the Arab-Israeli conflict. It will also involve new complications and challenges, however, especially for the United States.

**THS:** Do you view the trip, over the weekend, by a few Democratic congressmen to Baghdad, as evidence of a breakdown in the united foreign policy of the administration and Republicans with the Democrats?

**Pipes:** Well, there was never one united front. In 1991 the Democrats voted almost unanimously against going to war with Iraq.

That said, the things that those congressmen said in Iraq sound to me treasonous.

**THS:** Do you think support for the war on terror will continue to erode, barring another terrorist attack?

**Pipes:** The war was initiated against us in 1979. People slept for twenty-two years. They woke up last year, but have begun to doze again, and probably will not wake up again until something large hits us.

**THS:** Do you think that American support for Israel has the potential to unravel given another terror attack, or some Israeli action that Americans do not view favorably?

**Pipes:** I think American ties to Israel are strong. There are circumstances in which they might fray, but I do not anticipate that will happen.

**THS:** Would you like to make any final comment?

**Pipes:** Harvard was transformed and radicalized during my four years as an undergraduate, 1967–1971, and one symptom of that was the later appearance of the Salient to balance the one-note leftism of the Crimson. I am delighted to see, so many years later, that the Salient is still in business and flourishing. I am less delighted to see that it is still needed as a balance to the Crimson.

**THS:** Thank you for your time.

University professors fail to explain the meaning of jihad, but instead deceive