# Middle East Investments in American Universities Spark Campus Confrontations

*Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates are suddenly worth $tudying*

Just as they have in Western banking, real estate, and corporate finance, the oil-rich nations of Northern Africa and the Middle East are making their presence felt in American higher education. Faced with declining enrollments, shrinking donations, and widespread inflation, American colleges and universities are increasingly turning to the Arabs and Iranians, the men with the money, for assistance and support for the U.S. educational endeavor.

At the smaller schools, where teaching predominates over research, it is Middle Eastern students, their bills paid in full by government scholarships, that are most highly prized. Nearly one third of all foreign students studying here are from the OPEC nations, more than 80,000 in all and rising every year. Nearly half of these are from Iran alone, the wealthiest non-Arab Middle Eastern country.

At the larger schools, contracts and endowments are more valued than students, and a procession of American deans and college presidents has traveled to the Middle East to get them. As a result, one can find a $1 million Aryamehr chair in multinational management, courtesy of the Shah of Iran, at George Washington University; a $750,000 Umar al-Mukhtar chair of Arab culture from Libya and a United Arab Emirates distinguished visiting chair in Arab civilization, both at Georgetown University; and a $1 million King Faisal chair of Islamic and Arab studies from Saudi Arabia and a $1 million Shanhanshah Aryamehr Pahlavi chair in petroleum engineering from Iran, both at the University of Southern California. Contracts and lesser grants from the Middle East have been garnered by Columbia, MIT, Michigan, UCLA, and Duke, to name but a few. Often, the money goes to support a relatively recent phenomenon on American campuses: the Arab or Middle East study center. Such centers are now established at Princeton, Chicago, Harvard, Utah, Texas, Pennsylvania, UCLA, Georgetown, Michigan, and New York University. Fund-raising for the centers offers special opportunities, because American multinational corporations that trade heavily with Middle Eastern nations are also likely to contribute. The icons of American business, it seems, have no qualms about Middle Eastern ties, either commercially or philanthropically.

These contributions—both from American corporations and Middle Eastern nations—have attracted a fair amount of criticism, primarily on the grounds that accepting Arab or Iranian money compromises academic freedom and integrity. The American Jewish Committee, for example, says that Arab grants and contracts "may be used to skew university curricula, underwrite biased anti-Israeli programs, and support on-campus propaganda." Indeed, there is little doubt that university curriculums have been affected by the Arab influx. A study of schools with large foreign-student populations by a foreign student adviser at the University of California at Berkeley revealed that 40 percent had adjusted their curricula to meet the needs of foreign students; this may reflect in large part the offering of English instruction to foreigners, however.

Whether or not academic integrity has been compromised is far more difficult to pin down; many would hold that the only difference between a Middle Eastern grant and one from an American source is geography. What does seem clear, however, is that because many in the United States have yet to feel at ease with this country's relatively recent alliance with prominent Arab nations the grants flowing into higher education from the Middle East have been scrutinized more than most. And measured against the traditional academic standard of "no strings attached," several of the grants have come up short, to the embarrassment of both donors and recipients.

The most recent controversy over one such grant occurred this past November at the University of Southern California. Not only was the school embarrassed by the controversy, which was played out in the national press and on national television, but the president, John R. Hubbard, is expected by university sources to resign as a direct result. Hubbard, a 61-year-old British historian who taught at Yale and Tulane, among other places, has been president of the university since 1970. What he did that brought disfavor was to approve without faculty consultation, or urge the university's 40-member board of trustees to approve, an agreement to set up a Middle East study center under the nearly total control of a group of businessmen who trade with the Middle East. The businessmen would exercise their control through a foundation set up outside the university to raise $22 million for the study center. The foundation, as well as the center, was the brainchild of J. Robert Fluor, a USC trustee and the president of a multinational construction company that is doing $272 million worth of business with Saudi Arabia alone. Foundation money was to come from many U.S. corporations doing business with the Middle East, including Fluor's.

It gets even more irregular from here. The director of the foundation was to be William Beling, the holder of the $1 million King Faisal chair at USC. Beling was also to be director of the center itself. Along with Beling, the center's other four directors were to be appointed by the foundation, with at least two drawn from the university's board of trustees. According to some ambiguous wording in the arrangement, which Hubbard himself admits was "convoluted," the outside foundation would have had extraordinary control over admissions and faculty. Grant Beglarian, dean of the USC school of performing arts, says, "It was a three-times-removed way of setting up a program. The foundation was set up outside the university to raise funds for a university program, and the president of the foundation is a USC professor who then is reappointed back into the university as the center's head."

Undoubtedly, the way the contract was agreed upon was just as abhorrent to the faculty as the outside confrol it imparted. They first learned about the contract from an article in the Los Angeles *Times* that appeared after it was a fait accompli. As John LeBlanc, a management professor and dean of the faculty senate, said, "Administrators and trustees do not establish academic units unilaterally . . . in back rooms." The executive boards of both the faculty senate and the president's advisory board, which includes some students, passed resolutions deploring the way it was handled. The

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in making the case for the humanities. "The blunt truth is that everyone is organized but the humanities," says the letter.

The AAAH is intended to give humanists, traditionally fragmented among specialized disciplines, a means of making common cause; the Washington office will give the humanists a "presence" in the place where important decisions are made. AAAH was deliberately given a name that suggests it aspires to be a counterpart of AAAS and its founders hope that, like AAAS, it will deal with both scholarly and policy matters.

AAAH is now a nonprofit in good standing, having 501-C-3 status with the Internal Revenue Service and start-up grants from the Exxon education foundation, Ford and Rockefeller foundations, and the Dyson-Kissner Corporation in New York. The question now is how many humanists, who really aren't used to this sort of thing, will ante up the $25 annual dues.

## Administration Backs Plan for Technology Foundation

Creation of a Foundation for International Technological Cooperation (FITC) to foster development in less developed countries is on the list of the Administration's New Year's resolutions, but the details will have to wait until President Carter decides on proposals for reorganization of the total federal structure for foreign aid.

The FITC has been in the pipeline for almost a year (*Science*, 16 June 1978) and Administration sources are now predicting the foundation will be in business by 1 October. Funding in the initial stages would amount to $80 million or $90 million transferred from the Agency for International Development (AID) budget, and an additional $25 million requested in the President's budget.

Since last summer, a small FITC planning office has been working to clarify the foundation's purpose and organization. Genuine cooperation is to be emphasized, with a major share of funds being spent overseas, mainly to strengthen indigenous institutions abroad and to support education and training programs in less developed countries (LDC's). Foundation backers argue that experts from LDC's should be more involved in planning and program implementation.

The President's science adviser, Frank Press, is chief patron of the idea in the Administration, and his Office of Science and Technology Policy is working closely with the FITC planning office. OSTP, in fact, has set up an advisory committee on science, technology, and development under Ford Foundation vice president David E. Bell, who was an AID director during the Kennedy Administration. The foundation idea has the support and apparently the personal interest of President Carter. It also has the backing of AID administrator John Gilligan and the State Department.

The FITC idea, however, is in a holding pattern until Carter acts on plans for a major reorganization of the government's foreign assistance programs, which include not only those administered by AID and State, but also loan programs under Treasury authority. The most ambitious reorganization proposal calls for establishment of an all-inclusive International Development Cooperation Administration (IDCA), of which FITC would be a semiautonomous part.

Whether Carter opts for IDCA or a less ambitious alternative, the issue of the degree of independence for FITC is potentially the stickiest question facing the foundation. Opposition could come from the AID bureaucracy who came late to the view that science and technology will be important in the future of U.S. aid programs and may now resist giving up part of the action to the foundation. On Capitol Hill, Senator Adlai E. Stevenson (D-Ill.), chairman of the Commerce Committee's science subcommittee, will introduce his own bill establishing the foundation. Stevenson's bill will reflect his conviction that the foundation will have to have maximum independence to be effective. The views of other major players in Congress, however, are not yet clear. When final plans for FITC are fixed, friction could also occur on questions such as how the staff is to be constituted and how much of FITC's funds will be spent abroad. To sum it up, FITC appears to be an idea whose fiscal year has come, but in Washington there are always those qualifying buts.

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university trustees, in response, approved a memorandum of understanding assuring that the center would be completely controlled by the university, which the faculty said was not enough. "The credibility of USC as an academic institution is now in jeopardy before the world," read a faculty senate resolution. "To restore our academic integrity, we believe that measures far more sweeping . . . are now imperative."

Finally, the trustees appointed a special committee to investigate the matter, and to oversee the start-up of the center. Ironically, their efforts may be needless, because few believe the center will be able to attract any donations now. "This is the equivalent of a Watergate for us," says LeBlanc. "I've received letters from faculty at other schools who were offered positions here, who now say they won't come." Indeed, faculty at other Middle Eastern centers said they were dumbfounded at what USC had done. "They goofed," said one. "They set it up in a stupid way."

In the midst of all this, some discomfiting details about Beling's choice in 1976 as the holder of the Saudi chair also came to light, compounding the university's embarrassment and confusing the issue somewhat. Beling, it seems, was named as the recipient of the chair in the agreement Hubbard signed with the Saudis when it was set up; Beling, a former official of the Arabian American Oil Company, was also the person who got the Saudis to endow the chair. Hubbard insists that Beling was his choice, and that all he did was indicate who would be picked if the Saudis gave the funds. The contract, in fact, says that future incumbents in the chair are to be chosen by USC in consultation with the Saudis, "within the acceptable academic traditions of the university."

The incident is roughly parallel to the manner in which the Iranian chair in multinational management at George Washington University was filled, also in 1976. Philip D. Grub, a professor in the school of business, helped negotiate the endowment, was mentioned by university officials as a likely recipient, and ultimately was appointed to fill the chair. No strings were attached, Grub explained. "I was simply the only person in the department who had had major previous contacts with Iran and the Middle East." Both the USC and GWU arrangements were defended by the director of one Middle East center, who said, "As long as both instructors were already on the faculty, I see nothing wrong with letting a donor know in advance who is going to get the chair." But another Middle East center director says he would not do that. "We let the countries know how we've spent the money after we've spent it."

What this seems to establish, more than anything else, is that different schools slice the bread differently. Some, for example, have objected to donations from the Middle East on the grounds that acceptance implies approval of the political regimes in the country of origin. Iranian donations have sparked protest demonstrations on several campuses, and Saudi money has been criticized because the Saudis often refuse entrance visas to Jews and discriminate against women. Neither of these countries, which both have close official ties to the United States, has had real difficulty finding recipients for their largesse, however. Iran, for example, has linkages of one sort or another with more than 50 U.S. universities. The Saudis have reported receiving far more requests than they can hope to fill.

Iraq and Libya, in contrast, are the black sheep in the Arab flock to many U.S. universities. Both have closer ties to the Soviet Union than to the United States, but neither is reluctant to send their students here or to benefit from American expertise, Iraq has 1000 students here, and Libya, 2000. Ibrahim El-Sharif, the cultural attaché in Libya's Washington, D.C., embassy, says that "we would be glad to share cultural programs and assistance with any American university," adding that he is only "concerned to see objectivity taking place" in whatever programs are set up. "Most of our students here get an education from Jews," he says. "Many have Jewish advisers. The only thing we discriminate against is Zionism, but not Jews."

A great outcry has resulted on most of the occasions when Libya or Iraq has assisted or attempted to assist universities. Georgetown University, for example, was widely criticized for accepting the endowment from Libya in 1976. Columnist Art Buchwald, in a letter to the student newspaper, accused the university of accepting "blood money from one of the most notorious regimes in the world today. Why not an Idi Amin chair in genocide, a Premier Vorster South African chair in apartheid, or a Brezhnev studies program in human rights?" Perhaps because of this furor, in the summer of 1978 Georgetown president Timothy Healy literally sent back a $50,000 check from Iraq that had been solicited by their Center for Contemporary Arab Studies to be used, ironically enough, for the study of Islamic ethics.

Michael Hudson, director of the Georgetown study center, says he hopes to establish another arrangement with Iraq in the future, because the center needs all the funds it can get. "People don't call us," he says. "We have to approach them, and it isn't easy. For one thing, officials in Libya and Iraq have seriously debated whether it is right for them to give money to a university in the United States, which is supplying arms to Israel. When we traveled to Libya in search of the grant—Arabs like person-to-person contacts—and initially went away empty-handed, a member of the People's Congress there said there were many who feel this country and its institutions are an enemy."

Despite such difficulties, Georgetown's center, which is a part of its school of foreign service, has had more success in prying funds loose from the Middle East than any other. It has received grants from Oman, Qatar, Yemen, Jordan, the United Arab Republic, and Egypt—a total of $1.48 million from Arab nations—as well as grants from American corporations such as Bechtel, General Motors, Exxon, and Citibank.

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"We've tried to approach every Arab government with an embassy here in Washington," Hudson says. "That way, we can avoid any charges of bias, considering the great differences among the Arab nations." Of course, this also avoids passing up the opportunity for funds from anyone, no matter what their policies are. "None of the grants have any strings attached. They can't designate a specific course or person to use it. We do, however, offer to create a chair in the name of an Arab intellectual hero or the donor. We also appeal to the tradition of philanthropy, and point out that the center will better American understanding of the Arab world."

Although a controversy was sparked by the Libyan grant to Georgetown, at least three universities reported no difficulties or controversy surrounding their acceptance of Libyan money. A dean at the University of Michigan, which has received $90,000 from Libya to fund a summer institute in Arab literature and language, says he "found no special ethical issues in accepting the grant. We don't think it constitutes approval of the Libyan regime." Paul English, director of the Middle Eastern Study Center at the University of Texas, which received a Libyan grant, says, "We had no controversy about it here. Actually, it's really no different from an Iranian grant, or an Exxon grant, which some people may find objectionable." Khosrow Mostofi, director of the Middle East Center at the University of Utah, which received $88,000 from the Arab Development Institute in Tripoli, Libya, also says he "had no trouble accepting it. We could hardly be accused of bias, because we appointed an Egyptian to fill the position they funded."

What is all right at one university is evidently not all right at another, however. Trustees at the University of Pennsylvania raised enough objections about a proposed agreement with the Arab Development Institute to prompt Libya to withdraw it several months ago. Thomas Naff, director of the Middle East Center at the school, remains bitter about the debate. "In the first place, it was a 3-year joint research and training project and not a contract. In the second place, the Libyans agreed to abide by our insistence on academic freedom and nondiscrimination," he says. "There were objections just because Libya *is* Libya. It seems that our university suffers from ignorance and stereotypes just as much as anybody else." Naff said that Jewish professors at the university were in the forefront of the opposition, and that he had been besieged by calls and complaints from both local and national Jewish organizations. When a reporter phoned recently, he asked, "How do I know you're not from one of those Jewish committees?"

Middle Eastern scholars are not the only ones feeling bruised by such encounters. Hassan Yassim, an attaché in the Saudi Arabian embassy in Washington, D.C., and a graduate of Chico State College in California, says, "It is disheartening to feel that every time there is a contribution of major size—such as the contribution to USC—we are flogged in public and accused of an interest in subverting American public opinion with propaganda. Our intent, in assisting American universities, is to have better relations with the United States and its people, and we are going to do this. Lots of our officials are graduates of U.S. schools, and we are likely to continue giving donations just as any other alumni."—R. JEFFREY SMITH