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## Keeping Intellectual Borders Open

**L**ast September, the Office of Foreign Assets Control — part of the Treasury Department — made a surprising ruling. Publishers could publish works by authors living in certain countries, including Iran, Libya, Sudan and Cuba, but they couldn't edit them. Those countries are subject to American economic sanctions, and the office decided that to consult with an author about a manuscript was against the rules. This was a novel interpretation of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, which explicitly exempts informational materials from economic embargoes. Naturally, the ruling had publishers and authors up in arms.

The Treasury Department needs to remove this inappropriate restriction and do so promptly. Its practical effects do nothing to penalize the governments of sanctioned countries and everything to harm the very people who are most interested in a free and open exchange of literary and scientific ideas. This ruling is part of an unwelcome pattern since 9/11. In the name of security the administration has too often reacted in ways that diminish America's role as a central exchange in the marketplace of ideas. Visas for foreign scientists, graduate students and artists have been unnecessarily restricted. The movement of American scientists has been restricted too.

There are many weapons in the war against terrorism. One of the most powerful is the enlightened, rational values that America has come to stand for. Ideas pose no risk to us until we begin to try to control them.

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