

“Defeat their ideology? No one in the U.S. national security apparatus has a clue about where even to begin.”



by Lev Tsitrin

Society's priorities are not necessarily those of its members – as illustrated by Reg Green's [amusing recollection](#) of his and his classmates' naive joy at closing of school during German Blitz.

The chief priority of a society is its survival and well-being – yet egotistic instincts often go counter to that overriding good. This is a well-known paradox – and it is not easy to resolve, for even good intentions may be counter-productive.

There could be too much of a good thing, after all; this was what President Eisenhower stressed when talking of the military-industrial complex that on one hand was the backbone of American security, but on the other hand had the potential to selfishly steer resources to its own needs, and for its own profit at the expense of other vital priorities, be they economic, social, or political.

The existence of what I would call – following Eisenhower's terminology – “the industrial book-publishing complex” that monopolizes our presumably-free “marketplace of ideas” is much harder to justify than that of the military-industrial complex. The latter is a necessity; the former is a choice – and a wrong choice at that. “The land of the free,” America enshrined its citizens' freedom to speak in the Constitution's First Amendment – but corporate book-publishers perceive such freedom as an economic threat, and blocked it via a government action. The Library of Congress that assigns to upcoming books their subject-matter keywords by which they can be found and ordered by the nation's libraries and bookstores officially denies them to author-published books, rendering them invisible in the marketplace. You want to get into the “marketplace of ideas”? Go to the corporate publishers.

Needless to say, thus neat arrangement turned our much-touted free speech into the “appearance” of free speech, replacing government censorship with the corporate one. What used to be called “censorship” has become “editorial control.”

This puts public speech at the mercy of corporations – and there being much more speech than corporations can handle, the bulk of it falls by the wayside. And it is not necessarily the worst part – as the corporate publishers would like us to believe – but the most urgently needed one, too.

Consider, for example, the title of this piece – quoted from the *New York Times'* review of *“By All Means Available: Memoirs of a Life in Intelligence, Special Operations, and Strategy,”*

a book by Michael G. Vickers who was at the center of American involvement in Afghanistan. The review, written by one Andrew J. Bacevich, “chairman and co-founder of the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft,” was titled “[Where Did We Go Wrong in Afghanistan?](#)” and concluded with Mr. Bacevich’s incomprehension of the lesson that Mr. Vickers drew from his Afghan experiences – the lesson that “dismantling terrorist networks is necessary but not sufficient. You also have to defeat their ideology and prevent their reconstitution.” Mr. Bacevich’s finds this inconceivable, and his punchline is permeated by disbelief: “Defeat their ideology? On that issue, no one in the U.S. national security apparatus has a clue about where even to begin.”

While I doubt Mr. Bacevich’s motivations in stressing this fact (“the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft” which he heads is rumored to be an off-shoot of NIAC which lobbies for the ayatollahs), it is true that Americans – in government and out of it – have no clue on how to defeat the ideology that powers the ayatollahs, the Taliban, and their world-wide terrorist ilk. This duly noted, the question arises – that of “why”?

Is it because no one understands what is wrong with Islamist ideology? Not so. I started writing about the fatal flaw in Islamist thinking years before 9/11, showing that the certainty of knowing God’s will which underpins regimes like the Taliban and the Iran’s ayatollahs’ is tantamount, to use the religious terminology, to idol-worship – which the Islamists say they abhor. I won’t repeat the argument here ([the article from a couple years ago](#) – its framing as relevant today as it was then, given the daily reports of Biden’s upcoming rapprochement with the ayatollahs – will do).

So the question is not how to do it, but how to convey the solution to the “clueless U.S. national security apparatus” – when the “marketplace of ideas” that is a natural venue for such a task has become, courtesy of the government, the

exclusive playground of corporate publishers who make money by playing it nice, by being “politically correct,” who abhor any thought of rocking the boat? With our “marketplace of ideas” being neutered of thinking (the “politically correct” “thinking” dominating it is neither “correct,” nor is “thinking”), how do you clue in our clueless government?

Well, in the absence of a reliable mechanism for exchange of ideas, this problem is not solvable, and there is no remedy in sight: corporations abhor an open marketplace of ideas because in an open marketplace they will lose out – no one will need them, so no one will heed them, and at the same time they have the government in their pocket – and the government does their bidding by silencing individual voices so only the corporate ones are heard in the marketplace.

The end result of the dominance of the “industrial book-publishing complex” is that, as Mr. Bacevich elegantly put it, “no one in the U.S. national security apparatus has a clue about where even to begin” when it comes to “defeating Islamist ideology.”

When it came to the “industrial-military complex,” it was clear to Eisenhower what needed to be done: “we must guard against [it’s] acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists, and will persist.” The same is true of our “industrial book-publishing complex” that runs on censorship – but it is fully entrenched and backed by the government, with no Eisenhower to warn us of its dangers. .

The “industrial book-publishing complex” doesn’t care for the common good, but only for the profit. To the young Reg Green and his classmates, the Blitz meant only cancellation of classes. The people in the government who, in the parochial interests of the “industrial book-publishing complex” closed off the “marketplace of ideas” to independent thought are not kids but grown-ups – and yet they too cannot see beyond the

joys of corporate profit. They don't care about the Blitz of suicide bombing wrought by Islamists the world over. As far as they are concerned, the world may be burning but the school is off and nothing else matters. That we are powerless to fight off the Islamist ideology, and defeat the plague of despotism and terrorism motivated by it, is none of their business. They are making money. Let the world burn.

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