

DENIALISM, TOLERISM AND CANCEL CULTURE

by Howard Rotberg



Any strong ideological belief carries with it a risk of denying those facts that do not support the ideology.

The denial of certain facts approaches an ideology of *Denialism* when the facts denied seem incontrovertible. So if there is doubt, for example by Islamist radicals concerning the fact of the Holocaust, that denial of fact must arise from a strong ideology, in this case a hatred of the Jewish people and the wish to excise the Jewish presence in the Middle East.

And if we deny the fact of Muslim tolerance of Islamist radicals and use of cancel culture, then we are denialist, since Muslim intolerance of Jews and Christians and non-Muslim Africans is quite clear.

I am concerned not just about Iranian and other threats against Israel but also about the increasing genocide against

Christians in Arab countries and the persecution of other minorities in Asia and Africa. Denialism and excessive tolerance can lead to submission?

American psychologist Kendra Cherry has summarized psychological denial as follows:

“Denial is probably one of the best known defense mechanisms, used often to describe situations in which people seem unable to face reality or admit an obvious truth (i.e. “He’s in denial.”). Denial is an outright refusal to admit or recognize that something has occurred or is currently occurring. Drug addicts or alcoholics often deny that they have a problem, while victims of traumatic events may deny that the event ever occurred.

“Denial functions to protect the ego from things that the individual cannot cope with. While this may save us from anxiety or pain, denial also requires a substantial investment of energy. Because of this, other defenses are also used to keep these unacceptable feelings from consciousness.”

Donald Trump, who actually was unafraid to discuss the vetting of Islamist immigrants to the U.S. was the subject of “cancel culture” even to the point where Twitter cancelled his social media account. Concerns about Joe Biden’s business dealing with China, his protection of his corrupt son Hunter, his apparent inappropriate behavior with young women, his past associations with Klansmen, his desire for “open borders” and his mental fitness for office were all swept under the rug by mainstream media.

One would think that no educated politician in this era would ever mimic Neville Chamberlain’s infamous phrase justifying his sell-out of Czechoslovakia for the denialism of “peace for our time”, spoken the day before the Germans occupied Sudetenland and less than a year before the Germans occupied

Poland.

Barack Obama actually said to Muslim countries that “*peace in our time requires the constant advance of those principles that our common creed describes.*” Did he really believe that the world of Islamist dictatorships and theocracies share a “common creed” with an America immersed in liberal democracy and constitutional government. Tolerance? Denial?

Tolerism and Denialism and Cancel Culture have strong links: to tolerate evil or to tolerate facts that might cause a great evil is to show a *denial* of the danger of the evil or the facts that might create the evil. Through the process of “virtue signalling”, toleration or denial of inconvenient facts, conduce to a cancel culture to cancel those facts.

An example of Denialism was the reaction of President Obama and Secretary of State Hilary Clinton to the September 11, 2012 terrorist attack on the American embassy in Benghazi Libya and the murder of ambassador Chris Stephens and three other Americans – and the acceptance by American media (with certain exceptions such as Fox News) of what was surely a misleading, if not untruthful, explanation by the Obama administration.

Was Hillary also in denial that her assistant Huma Abedin was connected to the terrorist-supporting Muslim Brotherhood?

Despite its knowledge to the contrary, Obama and Clinton *denied* that Benghazi was in fact an organized terrorist attack and attempted to frame it as a spontaneous uprising against an obscure anti-Islam video by an American Coptic Christian.

I would argue that getting away with this denial and cancel culture paved the way for more of the same by media and universities, now made clear by intolerant, authoritarian actions by the “elites” in academia and politics, and even corporations in high tech. Even Major League Baseball cancelled its All-Star game scheduled to be held in Atlanta,

Georgia because MLB opposed the terms of new election laws, in Georgia which were intended to be fair and democratic, but which were interpreted by corporate elites as not radical enough.

Moreover, when finally Clinton had to appear in front of a Congressional investigation, she had the nerve to state, "What difference does it make?" to the important question of whether this was an organized terrorist attack. Only members of an Administration in absolute Denial over the extent of the Islamist terrorist threat and the danger of the Muslim Brotherhood and its associated organizations, could suggest that the facts about the Benghazi attack do not make a "difference".

In fact, hours before US Ambassador Christopher Stevens died in a terrorist attack in Libya, he sent Secretary of State Hillary Clinton a cable warning that local militias were threatening to take away security officers guarding the US diplomats.

Such denial of the facts of Benghazi, tolerance of Islamist threats, and willingness to cancel the truth by Hillary Clinton and the Obama administration, were a turning point in Denialist ideology.

Denial of facts that make us uncomfortable or anxious is a common psychological behaviour. When a denial of a whole set of facts, for example, in the political domain, becomes an ideology or belief system, it passes into the ideology of denialism.

Anthropologist Didier Fassin distinguishes between [*Mark Hoofnagle*](#), writing in the Guardian in March 2009 has described denialism as "the employment of rhetorical tactics to give the appearance of argument or legitimate debate, when in actuality there is none."

Denialism, as it is based on the psychological tactic of

denial, contains within it the seeds of other ideologies, and this is perhaps the scariest part. Dr. Carl Alasko, writing in *Psychology Today* in April, 2012, claims:

“There is an immutable fact about denial: it does not work—long term. Reality always wins. And when it does, the next step in the process is blame, which shifts responsibility onto someone or something else. ‘I only did it because of you! If you hadn’t done that, I wouldn’t have done this.’ So where there’s denial, blame is always *available to ease the pain when reality bites.*”

So when denial runs up against the reality of certain facts, says Alasko, blame is sure to follow. And that is where denialism and tolerism morph into the oldest blame of all – the blame for everything wrong in the world on the Jews, and now on the Jewish State. The new antisemitism transforms the historical hatred of Jews in the diaspora into hatred and an obsession with the supposed sins of the Jewish state.

The media often participates in denialism and tolerism by not adequately reporting on the facts pertaining to terrorists. We saw this clearly in recent terrorist attacks in Boulder Colorado and North Vancouver Canada, where the media distorted the facts by inferring the perpetrators might be “mentally ill” or “loan wolves” overlooking that they were Muslims who have been radicalized online or in Islamist mosques. Typically, the police spokesman appears on the day of the attack to state that no motive is yet known; but then by the next day, the media is no longer interested and no police statement on motivation is ever done.

Some excellent work has been done in this area by American writer and head of the *Middle East Forum*, Daniel Pipes, and by American writer Bill Siegel in his 2012 book, *The Control Factor: Our Struggle to See the True Threat*.

Pipes, in his still-relevant essay, “Denying Islam’s Role in

Terror” in the spring 2013 *Middle East Quarterly*, argued: “The establishment – law enforcement, officials, the media, and academics – has shied away from seeing this (terrorist) violence as [not biased](#) against them. They worry that being perceived as anti-Islam will inspire even more alienation and violence. Second, officials want to avoid the many [Islamist inspiration](#)”. Denial?

Even the death of 3000 civilians on 9/11 was inadequate for the American establishment to name the Islamists as the enemy: One day after 9/11, U.S. Secretary of State [Islamophobic](#),’ accusations that can ruin careers in today’s public environment.”

Critical Race Theory denies all of the fairness towards Blacks demonstrated by Americans individually and through their institutions. Americans voted in a Black President for two terms. In my mind, the fear of offending radical Blacks who espouse violence is as inappropriate as the appeasement of radical Islamists.

Bill Siegel posits the dirty little secret that underlies much of the examples of tolerance – those in which we accept that somehow we are the cause of the enemy’s behavior and thus move our focus away from the enemy and onto endless consideration about what else we can do. This is part of his idea of a self-deceptive “Control Factor” maneuver; we can easily believe that if we change our behavior theirs will change as well.

Hence the Mid-East peace process, which Siegel calls “the extortion process” where there is an endless recycling of Palestinian “demands” and Israeli “concessions” implying that Israel causes Palestinian terrorism not the Palestinian leadership that incites their people. What is too frightening is the realization that there is nothing Israel or its Western counterparts can do to please the Islamists except national suicide, when it comes to stopping terrorism. We do not control or cause the Islamist beast, and we have to stop

pretending that it is possible.

Denialism obscures the need in the West to both vet and re-educate Muslim immigrants so that they understand the primacy of liberal values here and also the separation of Church and State.

Again, we in the West can learn from Israel. See how conservative Muslims in the Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan, are overcoming years of supposed solidarity with terrorist Palestinians to put their people first in the establishment of business and cultural relations with the Jewish State. Once we overcome denialism, tolerism and cancel culture, and stop pouring money down the terrorist drain, we can finally promote healthy ideologies as we confront what I call the *Leftist-Islamist-Globalist* agenda.

Biden/Harris is certainly a set-back, but let us be clear on what we need to do. Denying facts and appeasing or tolerating both international terrorists and domestic Black terrorists, and using cancel culture to censor liberal speech must give way to a renewed liberal democracy based on Constitutional principles, strength of purpose and not on a worship of Power.

Howard Rotberg is a Canadian Jewish retired lawyer and author of four books on ideologies, political culture and values. His most recent book is *The Ideological Path to Submission ... and what we can do about it*, from which this essay is adapted. He founded Canada's sole conservative values and pro-Israel publishing house, Mantua Books –