

Open Letter

Today we are taking the unusual step of publishing an attributed article on this page. It is an open letter from Jeanie Kennedy, Director of *Free Exchange*, to Vince Miller, President of the **International Society for Individual Liberty**, about the debate within the Libertarian movement about the war. We believe that what Jeanie Kennedy has to say has a significance far beyond the dispute between these two Libertarian organisations over the conduct of a conference. It is about **setting the world to rights**.

Open Letter to Vince Miller, President of the International Society for Individual Liberty

Dear Vince,

As you know, I was extremely upset by the conduct of the recent conference of the International Society for Individual Liberty.

The segment entitled, "*Panel Discussion – Liberty and War. US Foreign Policy Today. What is the nature of the order the US government is trying to implement around the world?*" had been advertised in the ISIL Peace Institute webpage as a debate. It was nothing of the kind. What ensued was a 'debate' exclusively between different shades of anti-war opinion: the first presentation a family skit which acted embarrassed for the U.S. President and Nation, and the second – astoundingly – a polemic for Islam by a Palestinian, which made outrageously false statements about, and showed an incredible bias against, Zionism and Israel. This was an unbelievably sad and embarrassing presentation for ISIL to have been any part of.

Skits are great for educating people about simple ideas and English dialogue. But they aren't good for the presentation of complex ideas and facts in dispute. By using this technique at an ISIL conference, serious discussion is by-passed, implying that all libertarians are in agreement on the matter. It's okay to have fun lampooning US foreign policy, but wrong to imply that one is either a dove or a simpleton Bush fan. By presenting only one side of the Islamic-Jewish dispute in Palestine/Israel, the implication again is that the truth of the matter is self-evident, and that no one may disagree and be considered libertarian.

One of the presentations ran way overtime. Several of us asked for

more time for the Question and Answer section, but only one person got to ask a question and then the session was cut off, with half a dozen people in the line, waiting their turns at the microphone! There was no "debate" as advertised, not even in the Q&A!

Through ISIL's **Peace Institute** website, you have clearly and explicitly aligned ISIL with the anti-war point of view. And moreover, as President of ISIL, you are responsible for the sidelining of the pro-defense point of view at a major international conference of libertarians.

I cried – I cried because I was experiencing the emotion of extreme frustration. I continued to cry for over a week afterwards, every time I thought of it. Can you imagine a person being appalled at how an unfair, undeserved attack on the reputation of a nation s/he respects, was carried on effectively in her name?

In response to others' similar objections, you wrote:

"Sorry about Dean. It wasn't so much the content, but his style [!] - which I found to be rather inflammatory. An equally powerful opponent who would have been able to counter his arguments would have been much better. And actually we tried to do that but we had a batch of last minute cancelations and we were left scrambling."

Actually, his style was not ranting. What I questioned was the content. Who were those other speakers with opposing viewpoints you say were previously scheduled and who canceled at the last minute? Seriously, I'd like to know; they could be used as future speakers. You had the opportunity to include at least one very knowledgeable opponent on the panel but didn't do so. Tim Starr, a well-known writer and self-defense proponent, had volunteered to be on the panel. Jim Elwood, your Vice President, told him that the subject was being, or had been discussed at a meeting. Why was Tim led to hope that he was going to be asked to join the panel right up until the time of the presentation?

Later that day, when I sat at the speaker's corners, I tearfully told the first speaker, an American citizen himself, that maybe I was old-fashioned, but that I was brought up to believe that when I went abroad, I was to be a proud representative of my country (the USA), and I felt that his whole presentation was anti-U.S. and that I was very upset. At this point, one girl at the table (from the Ukraine, I believe) also became tearful, as it was apparent she understood my reaction. I never thought that to participate an ISIL conference you had to check – not your guns – but your *citizenship* at the door!

It has become clear to me from this and other experiences that the world political spectrum has had a massive shakeup, such that not only left-right but even Libertarian-non-Libertarian is not currently as important as what, for lack of a better term, might be called the Hawk (or as I prefer, "Eagle") vs. Dove debate.

Lenin used to say of liberal-leftists, that they were "useful idiots."

Have you heard of the new term among some libertarians, "idiotarian" or "villepinism?" Idiotarians or villepinists are those people who systematically side with evil without themselves adopting the evildoers' objectives. Villepinists sneer at what they consider "simplistic" flag-waving Americans, and their libertarian contingent are not exceptions. I consider my own sense of patriotism bound up with core libertarian principles: America's practice of, and cultural respect for, liberty, especially in comparison to the countries where our terrorist enemies breed. The U.S. cannot defend against every possible terrorist attack on U.S. soil, and must take their war on us, to them.

I believe that the villepinist branch of Libertarianism is going to die, and the sooner we step away from it, the better off we will be. It is important to libertarians who are in favor of victory over terrorism to promote their ideas, facilitating the evolution of those ideas into even better ideas. If we do not, people out there who would be open to our ideas will never find us, and that will not help the ideas develop.

When it is clear that it is going to be a constant uphill struggle to get one's ideas on the table in the organization, because in good faith, that organization's leaders/members are strongly opposed to that position and thus can't really do more than pay lip service to giving one's ideas a forum, then, without any need for personal rancor or hostility, it may well make the most sense to create a new focus for all those who might be interested in one's ideas. There is a good reason to strike out in a new organization – not to hurt the old organization or brand anyone evil, but, by offering people a choice, to facilitate the full and open competition of ideas that will lead to the growth of knowledge. If being true to anti-idiotarian libertarianism means we are *initially* a small movement, well, so be it. But if we do not step away we will never grow, because others who feel like us will not be able to find us. We have to speak out.

If ISIL is to flourish, then it should be a coalition of hawks and doves, Americans and non-Americans, men and women. To cut off one polarity would not be the act of a world-wide freedom movement. I hope and expect that ISIL will publish an opposing article in the FNN newsletter, and have real foreign policy debates at future conferences.

Very truly yours,

Jeanie Kennedy, MBA
Director, Free Exchange
A San Francisco Supper Club
Dedicated to Secular Individualism

Fri, 08/15/2003 - 17:24 | [digg](#) | [del.icio.us](#) | [permalink](#)

Thanks for this!

I've found myself distancing from the libertarian organizations, because of the anti-Bush and anti-Iraq and anti-defense ideas they are wholeheartedly embracing. Thanks for letting me know that I

am not alone.

by a reader on Sat, 08/16/2003 - 16:21 | [reply](#)

To Sarah, David, and et al,

Do you really think that no one feels a similar sense of betrayal from your position on the war?

by a reader on Sat, 08/16/2003 - 16:55 | [reply](#)

A sense of betrayal

Speaking for myself, I see no indication that anyone has betrayed anyone in this matter. Libertarians have always held diverse views about all sorts of issues, and one of them has always been the issue of war, its causes, and its morality. Recent events such as the 9-11 attack have caused many people on all sides of this issue to elevate its priority in their minds, and to devote more effort to arguing for their side. This raises a purely practical problem, not only for Libertarians but for all sorts of movements and organisations, of whether the movement or organisation as a whole should take a position on the war (in which case, members who take the opposite view have to choose whether to continue to identify themselves as supporters of that group or to support or form rival groups), or not (in which case the organisation chooses to refrain from influencing a debate which, both sides agree, now has increased importance and urgency).

There already are many different organisations and movements that are broadly in the libertarian camp. Being separate means, among other things, that they have the flexibility to oppose each other on some issues, while remaining allies on others. Organisations split all the time, and merge all the time, for perfectly sound and decent reasons: betrayal seldom comes into it.

So if anyone feels betrayed at the line being taken by Jeanie Kennedy (or for that matter by Vince Miller), or by us at ***Setting the World to Rights***, I think they are making a serious mistake. I would remind them that libertarians, like rational people generally, do not claim jurisdiction over each other's opinions. As for betrayal, I would direct them to our series **On Loyalty**.

by David Deutsch on Sat, 08/16/2003 - 17:39 | [reply](#)

Anonymous Coward response

Interesting that a person suggesting Sarah and David have betrayed the Libertarian cause would choose to remain anonymous. Why not come out and write under your own name? What are you afraid of?

John Frank

by a reader on Sat, 08/16/2003 - 20:34 | [reply](#)

So not all 'Libertarians' are bad then

I must admit, I have a problem with so-called 'Libertarians'. They talk a lot about freedom but when it comes down to it they are a bunch of hypocrites. I was therefore pleased to read Ms Kennedy's Open Letter as it clearly distinguishes the sad and sorry dross of 'Liberia' from the Libertarians who are busy **Setting The World to Rights**. I wish you well and look forward to seeing how this plays out in the world at large.

- David Anderson

by a reader on Sat, 08/16/2003 - 20:42 | [reply](#)

Perhaps betrayal was the wrong word.....

I agree that no such betrayal took place. Feeling a sense of betrayal is not the same as actually being betrayed.

However, as someone who has a fairly high regard for the TCS philosophy, I find it very disappointing that many of the people advocating TCS would take a pro-war position. (Based on what I consider shoddy arguments)

The "Open Letter" conveys Jeanie Kennedy's disappointment with the ISIL.

I am disappointed with "**The World**".

My comment was just a reminder that those living in glass houses might want to do something more productive than throw stones.

P.S. I was not "suggesting Sarah and David have betrayed the Libertarian cause".

by a reader on Sat, 08/16/2003 - 22:39 | [reply](#)

The First Use of the Word, Betrayal

The first use of the word "betrayal" was in a reader's comment, wherein he wrote, "Do you really think that no one feels a similar sense of betrayal from your position on the war?" Betrayal was not a word used in the entirety of my letter. The writer was attributing or projecting his own feelings of betrayal onto me, and/or Sarah and/or David.

Toward a civil society,

Jeanie Kennedy, MBA
Director of Free Exchange
A San Francisco Supper Club

by [jeanie kennedy](#) on Sun, 08/17/2003 - 23:01 | [reply](#)

Seen the first of the presentation too

That was in Switzerland with many pro-war libertarians...

Unfortunately we did not have the time to debate it. This is the kind of stuff we expect from our ideological enemies: caricature, logical fallacies, narrow view of the world... The kind of presentation also is prone to caricature: you can not sum up all the arguments in some of kind of "humorous dialog" (whatever that was).

I'm glad someone writes about it, and I'll send your letter to people who felt the same in Switzerland.

by [liberte](#) on Mon, 08/18/2003 - 08:02 | [reply](#)

Libertarianism is anti-war. J...

Libertarianism is anti-war. Just admit you are neocons you fascist dogs!

by a reader on Mon, 08/18/2003 - 13:14 | [reply](#)

Essentialism is an error...

...It consists of a cluster of theories and practices which deflect discourse from matters of truth and falsity, or whether to pursue this policy or that, into arguments about the meaning of terms. This converts substantial problems into merely verbal ones...

<http://www.the-rathouse.com/popessent.html>

by [Editor](#) on Mon, 08/18/2003 - 13:54 | [reply](#)

Damn, foiled again!

A reader wrote:

"Libertarianism is anti-war. Just admit you are neocons you fascist dogs!"

Dammit, he's got us there! (Sarcasm on) To be honest I never really backed war on Iraq to liberate a country under a Stalinist tyrant, or to stop Saddam from rearming and going to war, or to remove a source of backing for international terrorism, I'd just run out of red paint and wanted the blood of Iraqi children to paint the walls of my house. (sarcasm off)

by [Alan Forrester](#) on Tue, 08/19/2003 - 01:35 | [reply](#)

lol, this is kinda funny. It...

lol, this is kinda funny. It seems like another case of people agreeing with each other, and then building respect for each other based on that agreement, then disagreeing with each other. Some know how to deal with that disagreement, others do not.

If anything it's the indication of healthy minds who think for

themselves, even if they are sometimes "wrong." I'd be worried if everyone had the same feelings and thoughts on the war, Bush, and all those other things.

by [entivore](#) on Tue, 08/19/2003 - 05:30 | [reply](#)

Collectivist Thinking and Criminal Gangs

Jeanie Kennedy tells us that "I was brought up to believe that when I went abroad, I was to be a proud representative of my country (the USA)." Many of us were, Jeanie. Later, some of us grew up, cast aside collectivist thinking, and realized that we are *individuals* and don't "represent" anything but ourselves. It is unfortunate but true that the world has been divided up into geographical areas dominated by gangs of criminals who call themselves "the government." If I were to travel abroad and hear someone ridiculing or demeaning the criminals who dominate the area of the world in which I live, I would not cry; I would cheer.

by a reader on Fri, 08/22/2003 - 01:39 | [reply](#)

Collectivist Anti-Government "Thinking"

A Reader criticizes Jeanie Kennedy for saying: "I was brought up to believe that when I went abroad, I was to be a proud representative of my country (the USA)."

The reader accuses her of being insufficiently individualistic for supporting "the gang of criminals" dominating her geographical area. But Kennedy made it explicitly clear that: *"I consider my own sense of patriotism bound up with core libertarian principles: America's practice of, and cultural respect for, liberty, especially in comparison to the countries where our terrorist enemies breed."* She is clearly supporting those aspects of her government that reflect her highest political values, rather than a reflexive support for whatever policies they happen to have.

This is consistent with individualism.

On the other hand, the reader summarizes:

If I were to travel abroad and hear someone ridiculing or demeaning the criminals who dominate the area of the world in which I live, I would not cry; I would cheer.

The reader's opposition to his government seems to be independent of its policies. He has not used his independent judgment about the merits of its policies, but has aligned himself with the collective of government-haters who do not think for themselves about the merits of the policies.

Pot - Kettle

Gil

by [Gil](#) on Fri, 08/22/2003 - 17:14 | [reply](#)

yay gil

exactly right

-- Elliot Temple

<http://curi.blogspot.com/>

by **Elliot Temple** on Fri, 08/22/2003 - 18:55 | [reply](#)

Government Is an Extortion Racket

If a criminal gang extorts my wealth with threats of violence and incarceration, then, no, I *don't* care what use that criminal gang makes of the money it extorted. I realize that much of it is used to buy the votes and support of dimwitted sheep, by spending it to advance causes they approve of. Perhaps "Gil" is one of these dimwitted sheep?

by a reader on Fri, 08/22/2003 - 21:42 | [reply](#)

Separate Issues

I agree with the reader that government funding via compulsory taxation is immoral. And I can assure him that my vote has never been purchased by any politician.

But it seems that even "dimwitted sheep" have a greater capacity than he does to separate issues. While I object to my money being extorted, I am not indifferent to that money being used to save my life vs. to gas my neighbors. The reader's apparent indifference between these possibilities strikes me as quite troubling.

Gil

by **Gil** on Fri, 08/22/2003 - 23:50 | [reply](#)

irony

i've said in the past, and Gil is well aware of this I'm sure, that one of the rifts among libertarians goes something like: they all see the truth in the statement "taxes are theft". that's what makes them libertarians. but the difference is, some libertarians don't know anything else (and some do). i think it's ironic you would repeat The One Truth at me...

-- Elliot Temple

<http://curi.blogspot.com/>

by **Elliot Temple** on Sat, 08/23/2003 - 00:02 | [reply](#)

".....where our terrorist enemies breed."

They breed in our schools (Dylan Klebold & Eric Harris),

our universities (Theodore Kaczynski) and our military (Timothy McVeigh) Who will be the next Timothy McVeigh to come out of this gulf war?

by a reader on Sat, 08/23/2003 - 03:48 | [reply](#)

Government & the Mafia

"Gil" and his cheerleader "Elliot" are much impressed that the gang of criminals that extorted their wealth is now using that wealth to "save their lives." This is particularly amusing in light of the fact that, as with the extortion racket run by the Mafia, those who create and sustain the threat to their victims' lives are the very same extortionists who are running the racket. Truly, human gullibility knows no bounds.

by a reader on Mon, 08/25/2003 - 07:06 | [reply](#)

Gullibility

It would be convenient for anti-government ideology if it were true that all security threats were caused by those (the government) who extort money for security protection.

Convenience and ideological dogmatism seem sufficient to control the reader's interpretation of the facts of reality.

My standards are a bit higher, and I recognize threats to liberty that are unrelated to government activity.

Gil

by [Gil](#) on Mon, 08/25/2003 - 16:43 | [reply](#)

Gullibility 2

And another thing...

Even if it were the case (which it isn't!) that all of our security woes were caused by actions of the government, **it would still not follow** that the government should immediately cease all of its activities, or that one of its recent activities wasn't the best possible thing for us (or, at least, good).

It's *good* to think about what the best possible political system would be. And, I agree that this ideal involves a severely-limited, or perhaps non-existent government (as we know it).

But it's *bad* to confuse that with the notion that the best possible first step towards that ideal is to press the stop-all-government-activity-now-button, or to condemn everything government has done. Such notions lead people to the correct conclusion that the holder is ridiculous.

Convincing people that advocates of liberty are ridiculous is another bad first step.

Gil

by [Gil](#) on Mon, 08/25/2003 - 19:54 | [reply](#)

Gullibility

One of the later installments of this series will be about the conspiracy theorists' belief that non-conspiracy-theorists are gullible.

by **Editor** on Mon, 08/25/2003 - 23:20 | [reply](#)

more on the criminal gang and separating issues

The U.S Government...

Extracts (steals) over 20% of the nation's wealth, and uses its state and municipal tentacles -- which it essentially, by this point, controls -- to steal another 30% of everything we earn.

It intrudes in every aspect of our personal and financial lives. It tells us the nature of what we can ingest, read, and of the structures in which we live, work, and defecate.

It takes people rightfully and constitutionally pursuing their own happiness and puts them in cages, in greater numbers and for longer durations than murders and rapists.

It once gassed, burned and machinegunned to death 80 innocent people, in violation of nearly the entire Bill of Rights, covered up the truth, and commended those responsible for the mass slaughter.

It once handed over to Stalin two million innocent refugees to be murdered. Two million. That's more than Saddam. That's Pol Pot proportions.

What's its record been in the War on Terrorism?

9/11 happened because of government inadequacy and criminality. The FBI's incompetence in responding to warning signs, and the U.S. government's illegal deprivation of the essential human right of Americans to arm themselves on airplanes caused 9/11 -- regardless of whether the attacks were motivated by America's imperialist foreign policy, or by America's alleged surplus of freedom and Western values.

Thousands were killed in Afghanistan, but bin Laden wasn't found.

Thousands were killed in Iraq, but Saddam and his weapons weren't found.

Americans are being killed there to this day.

The airports have become great places for sexual abuse on the part of security personnel, evacuations happen often over the stupidest things, and terrorists can still bring weapons on planes -- but the pilots and passengers who would want to practice their inalienable right to do so openly can't.

Are you more likely to die from a terrorist attack, or the FDA

depriving you of your medicine? Who's really a bigger threat to your life?

Everything the government does might not be wrong or bad according to some odd neoObjectivist definition. But everything it does, so long as it is funded by taxation and applied through the initiation of force, is immoral.

All else aside, it is contradictory for libertarians or Objectivists to advocate war as it exists today, because doing so is advocating the forceful exaction of property from their neighbors for purposes considered inimical by those very people. You can believe that not everything the government does is bad, but you cannot, under libertarian constraints, support the imposition of these policies on your fellow libertarians, whether you consider them idiots or not. If the policies themselves necessitate the use of heavy involuntary funding, which they do, then those policies are inescapably in conflict with the very core of libertarian principles. You can't separate the issues any more than you can separate the intentions of the welfare state from its methods, or the legitimacy of Saddam's 100% election results from the brutal tactics he used to acquire them.

by a reader on Thu, 08/28/2003 - 15:51 | [reply](#)

Separating Issues

Ok, let me get this straight.

Should I oppose police investigating burglaries and assaults and murders (and arresting the perpetrators) because they are funded by taxes and because gun control made it harder for individuals to defend themselves?

If not, why should I oppose military actions I judge to be reasonable attempts to use those resources to protect liberty?

Doesn't it make sense to approve of these things, *while at the same time* advocating changes that increase individual liberty?

Gil

by **Gil** on Thu, 08/28/2003 - 16:52 | [reply](#)

Police investigations and war

Saying something like "should I oppose police investigating burglaries," much like saying "should I oppose the military defending the U.S.", misses the point.

The police don't simply investigate burglaries. They brutalize people, disarm innocents, and cause more crime than they deter. The military, or more accurately the civilian chickenhawks who control them, doesn't just defend the United States. Military action

blows children to bits, incites terrorism and causes more problems

than it solves.

I support a free market in the industry of justice and a volunteer militia to defend the United States. We would have far less crime and fewer wars and more freedom if this were the case.

That being said, I admit we don't live in an anarcho-capitalist society. I admit we have a government and as libertarians we should ask practical questions as to what's appropriate for them to do and what isn't.

If the government can do something that could be done in a libertarian society, maybe it's appropriate. If, for instance, China invaded us, I would support the military defending us. But I still think that would be better done by an armed, vigilant populace than by a bureaucratic socialist institution like the U.S. military. Everyone would be willing to defend his own home, so there wouldn't be much of a conflict.

An aggressive war on Iraq, like what was last executed, could not have, and would not have, been initiated by the private sector, or by voluntary action. If the slight majority of Americans who supported the war tried to do it on their own, it would have cost them way too much, they would have looked into its true costs and benefits more carefully, and I doubt it would have happened. Wars like the last one happen only because the system privatizes the benefits and socializes the costs. I very much doubt even the most hawkish warmongers I've talked to would have wanted to contribute a thousand dollars each to disarm Saddam, hiring a firm with the reputation of the U.S. government to get the job done. I do think they would -- as would almost every peacenik I've talked with -- do whatever it took to defend their home and country against invasion.

Whereas socialists like to say that those things that the private sector can't or won't do must be done by the state, principled libertarians should only rely on government actions that the private sector would do, but can't because the state won't allow it to. Like investigating crimes and delivering mail -- two things that would happen in anarchy, but we must depend on the government for because it has declared a monopoly in those areas.

Another thing: The police already "investigate" crime. But if they didn't, I certainly would never advocate that the government take on that new function. Libertarians should be careful not to blindly call all past government action fascist, I agree. The U.S. government's horrific record stands alone without need of hyperbole.

But we should also never advocate a new government activity, program, or function. We should never support the government in taking on more power, authority, and responsibility.

by a reader on Thu, 08/28/2003 - 18:44 | [reply](#)

Lack of Freedom Breeds Terrorism

Yes, terrorists "breed" in US government schools, which are among

the least free institutions within the USA (there haven't been any shootings in non-government schools in America). That is a good argument against those institutions being so unfree, not an argument that the USA is no freer than Afghanistan under the Taliban, Iraq under Saddam, etc.

McVeigh's terrorism was not "bred" into him while he was in the U.S. Army, as he didn't take up terrorism until he was well out of the service. John Allen Mohammed, one of the two beltway snipers, was honorably discharged from the Army because he was suspected of sabotage during Gulf War I but the charges against him could be proved. It's hard to say that the Army actually "bred" terrorism in him, when it inflicted the maximum penalty it could upon him for his anti-US activities. The same goes for the American Muslim who was in the US Army Rangers and murdered some of his fellow Rangers while they were stationed in Kuwait right before Gulf War II. He had expressed reservations about being sent into Iraq to kill his fellow Muslims, so he was relieved of that duty. He then went on to murder some of his fellow Rangers, anyways. He clearly didn't get his motivation to engage in this act of terrorism from the U.S. Army.

Not only is this anonymous coward engaging in a vile equivocation between the relatively high level of freedom in America and that of Taliban-Afghanistan, Saddamite-Iraq, Syria, Iran, etc., he is also grossly equivocating between a few isolated Americans who commit terrorist acts against their fellow Americans entirely of their own initiative, and countries which actively recruit, fund, train, equip, and dispatch terrorists against Americans. That is the sort of country that Iraq was under Saddam, that Afghanistan was under the Taliban, that Pakistan was until Musharraf started cleaning house, and that Iran and Syria still are.

America does not have a "breeding" program for terrorists. There are no US government agencies recruiting, funding, training, equipping, and dispatching people to engage in secret attacks upon innocent civilians in other countries. Yes, we do have covert and clandestine operations through the CIA and the Special Operations Command of the U.S. military, but they don't target innocent civilians. Yes, some innocent civilians do inevitably get killed when the US attacks some legitimate military targets, but the US tries to avoid such collateral damage as much as reasonably possible.

That is totally different, morally, from governments which breed terrorists for the primary purpose of sneak attacks upon innocent civilians.

by [timstarr](#) on Fri, 08/29/2003 - 19:48 | [reply](#)

terrorist breeding in America

"There are no US government agencies recruiting, funding, training, equipping, and dispatching people to engage in secret attacks upon innocent civilians in other countries. "

What about the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security

Cooperation, formerly known as the School of the Americas? The attacks they encourage might not be secret, but they are specifically against civilians.

by a reader on Sat, 08/30/2003 - 00:21 | [reply](#)

School Freedom

Yes, terrorists "breed" in US government schools, which are among the least free institutions within the USA (there haven't been any shootings in non-government schools in America). That is a good argument against those institutions being so unfree, not an argument that the USA is no freer than Afghanistan under the Taliban, Iraq under Saddam, etc. Are you seriously arguing that students in most private schools are freer than students in most public schools?

~Woty
<http://woty.davidsj.com>

by [Woty](#) on Sat, 08/30/2003 - 10:14 | [reply](#)

Missing the point

timstar misses the point. There are people willing to kill him (and anyone else reading this) just as readily in the U.S. as there are in the Muslim world. There are people in all parts of the world willing to embrace ideologies that tell them they are justified in taking terrorist actions. It is more important to understand and refute these ideologies and the psychological roles they play in people lives than it is to wage a military campaign within a certain geographic area.

by a reader on Sat, 08/30/2003 - 15:36 | [reply](#)

Soon to be missing in action? I hope not.

A reader writes: "It is more important to understand and refute these ideologies..." So you'll be going to Iran or Saudi Arabia to refute militant Islam? Thanks so much. And it's been nice knowing you.

Six months ago, your plight in attempting such a mission was no better in Iraq, a country then ruled by a Stalinist tyrant whose flag bore the words "God is great" in his handwriting. Your odds of survival are considerably better now, and improving. But to get to this situation it was necessary "to wage a military campaign."

by [Alan Furman](#) on Sat, 08/30/2003 - 18:31 | [reply](#)

Students Are Freer in Private Schools

Yes, students in private schools are freer than students in public schools. There is a lot of choice in private schools to attend, while there is virtually no choice in public schools to attend.

by [timstarr](#) on Sat, 08/30/2003 - 18:34 | [reply](#)

No Substitute for Victory

Yes, there are "people willing to kill" me in the US as well as in the rest of the world. The difference is that those in the U.S. do not have State sponsorship, and thus have considerably less resources with which to try to kill me. Not only is the U.S. government not sponsoring them those who wish to kill me, it is trying to stop them from killing me.

As for whether it is "more important to understand and refute" terrorist ideologies, I have yet to hear of a terrorist attack that was stopped by a refutation. "Excuse me, Mr. Terrorist, but the theory you're enacting by mass-murdering innocent civilians is false." "Oh, it is? Well, I guess I'll just have to quit, then."

It is important to understand and refute terrorist ideologies, but understanding and refutation are no substitute for military defeat of terrorists. If anything, their military defeat is a form of refutation of them, since their ideas include the prediction that they will not be defeated militarily.

by [timstarr](#) on Sat, 08/30/2003 - 18:42 | [reply](#)

WHISC/SOA Doesn't Teach Attacks on Civilians

The notion that the WHISC/SOA "encourages" attacks on civilians is a myth of the anti-American Left, with no truth in it whatsoever. The closest it comes to having a factual basis is that some of the Latin American soldiers who took classes (in things like radio operations) at the SOA were later implicated in attacks on civilians. However, the curriculum at that school does not teach that it is acceptable to make civilians primary targets; quite the opposite, respect for the rights of non-combatants is taught at that school.

by [timstarr](#) on Sat, 08/30/2003 - 18:47 | [reply](#)

Change of motto

Re: "Soon to be missing in action?" & "No Substitute for Victory"

So perhaps the motto of this web site should be changed to: "Bullets have consequences, ideas really don't matter" or "Ideas have consequences, but bullets have better ones."

By the way what ideologies are being introducing to Afganistan and Iraq by the U.S. forces? Non-militant Islam? Christianity ? The philosophies of Popper? or Plato? or Hegel? or Nietzsche?

I have seen more evidence that Americans are adopting Afgani culture than the other way around.

e.g.: <http://www.hamptonroads.com/pilotonline/military/ml0728fol.html>

by a reader on Sun, 08/31/2003 - 03:54 | [reply](#)

Re: No Substitute for Victory

It is important to understand and refute terrorist ideologies, but understanding and refutation are no substitute for military defeat of terrorists. If anything, their military defeat is a form of refutation of them, since their ideas include the prediction that they will not be defeated militarily.

This is a very important point. And here are two further aspects of that form of refutation:

- Often their ideas include the prediction that the West, because of various attributes that they think (mostly erroneously but to some extent accurately) that it must have, will not seriously *attempt* to defeat them militarily. So the attempt itself, once it is seen to be serious, already has some persuasive effect.
- The war against the West can be seen as an attempt to refute the idea that the Western way of life (with its unique ability to make progress peacefully and resolve moral differences through persuasion) is viable. by introducing cynicism and defeatism into the West's political decision making. Again, a serious attempt to fight back vitiates this attempted refutation.

And to 'a reader' who wants to change our motto: it was not the Americans who introduced bullets into the debate between the West and radical Islam, but yes, sometimes events can refute an idea. Sometimes only events can. This should not be news to anyone.

by [Editor](#) on Sun, 08/31/2003 - 04:20 | [reply](#)

Ideas do have consequences

Like, the idea that you can get American foreign policy to become more favorable to you if you blow up large buildings containing Americans has had a lot of consequences. First, for Americans, and later, for some of the evil bastards who believed that idea. Until that idea is thoroughly refuted though, more Americans will die, but argument alone can't refute it. With an idea like that, you can argue till the cows come home, but the only way to actually refute it is to demonstrate in practice that it is very very false.

by a reader on Sun, 08/31/2003 - 04:48 | [reply](#)

Re: Ideas do have consequences

Do you really think the terrorist were trying to change American foreign policy? I think the payoff for the terrorist was to themselves i.e.: That they could see themselves as heroic and virtuous by striking a blow against "the great satan"

by a reader on Sun, 08/31/2003 - 15:59 | [reply](#)

Re: Re: No Substitute for Victory

So wouldn't an H-bomb on Mecca or Bagdad or Kabul be a much better refutation of their theory than a conventional war?

by a reader on Sun, 08/31/2003 - 16:19 | [reply](#)

So?

Yes, students in private schools are freer than students in public schools. There is a lot of choice in private schools to attend, while there is virtually no choice in public schools to attend.

This means that private schools are potentially freer, because parents can choose free environments for their kids. It does not mean that the kids who are sent to unfree schools by their parents are any freer.

So I ask again: are you seriously arguing that students who are sent to private schools by their parents are generally freer than students sent to public schools by their parents?

~Woty
<http://woty.davidsj.com>

by [Woty](#) on Sun, 08/31/2003 - 19:28 | [reply](#)

Al Qaeda's Fantasy Ideology

You're definitely on the right track with the idea that 9-11 was done by the Islamofascists for themselves. I refer you to the article on the right side of this webpage, the first one just under the heading, "Off-Site." It was written by Lee Harris of the Hoover Institution. Mr. Harris says, much more eloquently than I do here, that the 9-11 perpetrators were not out to change our foreign policy, or our government, only to essentially have a morality play for themselves. He points out that this fact does not make these people any less dangerous, however.

I would also like to refer everyone to a great, fairly short article by the heroic Thomas Sowell entitled, "A Tale of Two Wars and their 'Fifth Column' Enemies," which can be found at the following link: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/fightforliberty/message/25>. Mr. Sowell's perspective, which I respect immensely, is that the current situation regarding The War on Terror is the greatest crisis America has ever faced.

Toward a civil society,
Jeanie Kennedy
Director, Free Exchange
A San Francisco Supper Club
Dedicated to Secular Individualism

by a reader on Sun, 08/31/2003 - 22:20 | [reply](#)

Thomas Sowell article

For those who don't want to join the Yahoo group to read the Thomas Sowell article referenced above, it can also be found [here](#):

<http://www.townhall.com/columnists/thomassowell/ts20030821.shtml>

Gil

by **Gil** on Sun, 08/31/2003 - 22:48 | [reply](#)

Americans Becoming Afghanized?

Funny, the only evidence you cite of Americans "adopting Afgani [sic] culture" is that a couple of soldiers killed their wives, then themselves, as if it were somehow uniquely Afghan for husbands to kill their wives, and as if it were unheard of for Americans to kill their wives before we overthrew the Taliban. That's both insulting to Afghans, and unrealistic about the rest of the world. Unfortunately, murderers exist in all societies.

As for what ideas are being introduced to Afghanistan and Iraq, how about the ideas of freedom of speech, freedom of education, freedom for women to not wear burkhas in public, freedom for women to work outside the home, etc.?

by a reader on Mon, 09/01/2003 - 02:04 | [reply](#)