

## INTRODUCTION

*The present state of the world is not the proof of philosophy's impotence, but the proof of philosophy's power. It is philosophy that has brought men to this state—it is only philosophy that can lead them out.*

— Ayn Rand, 1961

Look around the world, and you will see something that would have shocked anyone living in the aftermath of 9/11. Following the worst attack on American soil since Pearl Harbor, with thousands of our citizens killed, Americans were rightly outraged—and their (healthy) response was to demand retaliation. Our leaders in Washington insisted that the people who attacked us would be made to pay. No longer would anyone dare think of the United States as a “paper tiger.” The prevailing mood conveyed a clear message: America was entitled to defend itself. The nation was primed to unleash its full military might to annihilate the threat.

Now consider just *some* of the brazen attacks in the last year and a half: the massacre at the Paris office of the magazine *Charlie Hebdo*; shootings at free-speech events in Copenhagen and in Garland, Texas; the suicide bombings and murder spree across Paris; the mass shooting in San Bernardino, California; the bombing of the Brussels airport and subway; the slaughter at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida.

The events of the last year and a half reflect a long-standing trend, one that was supercharged in the last decade and a half: the ascent of the Islamist cause. That movement is strong materially, capable of inflicting harm, controlling territory, subjugating people. And, what's more significant: the movement is strong in its morale, exhibiting an astounding confidence. Iran's state-backing for jihadist groups (according to the U.S. State Department) is “undiminished,” and the regime seeks nuclear capability. Five-plus years after bin Laden's death, the al-Qaeda network lives on. The Taliban in Afghanistan has reconquered about as much territory as it held prior to the U.S.-led war. Across the Middle East, the Islamic State rampages. The group has conquered parts of Iraq and Syria, and it has distinguished itself through unspeakable barbarity. You might expect that to put potential recruits off, but in fact Islamic State is a magnet for foreign fighters, including many from Europe and North America.

Let that sink in: *Since 9/11, countless individuals have eagerly enlisted to*

*fight for the cause of Islamic totalitarianism.*

At the same time, many Americans are exhausted, resigned, demoralized. Our military forces—mighty, brave, determined—were sent into Afghanistan and Iraq, two winnable wars that became quagmires. Materially, the Islamists are far weaker than the enemies we faced in World War II. Then, we eliminated the threat to our lives and freedom in less than five years. Since 9/11, however, we've been told that this must be a "long war." George W. Bush viewed Afghanistan and Iraq as unwinnable. Indeed, Afghanistan is the longest war in America's history. Barack Obama further scaled back expectations, pointedly ruling out a World War II-like "victory" (a word he feels uncomfortable using).

We have reached a new normal: clouding our daily lives is the persistent threat of jihadist attacks. And, for fear of incurring the wrath of Islamists, many newspapers, magazines, and publishing houses (such as Yale University Press and Random House) engage in self-censorship. What we're seeing is the twilight of the freedom of speech.

Suppose that in the wake of 9/11 you told people that this grim reality lay ahead. They would have been astounded. Indignant even. Some might have dismissed it as far-fetched. After all, our military strength is unmatched in all of world history. And yet, far from defeated, Islamic totalitarianism is on the march. No one would have predicted the situation we face today.

We at the Ayn Rand Institute predicted it.

We warned against precisely that kind of disaster. We pinpointed the fundamental problem subverting American foreign policy. We championed an uncompromising solution.

In the aftermath of 9/11, ARI placed full-page ads in the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* explaining the attack and presenting an incisive warning. The "greatest obstacle to U.S. victory," wrote ARI's founder Leonard Peikoff, is not our enemies, but "our own intellectuals." They advocated the same ideas that had encouraged the enemy. "Fifty years of increasing American appeasement in the Mideast have led to fifty years of increasing contempt in the Muslim world for the U.S.," wrote Peikoff. The irrational ideas shaping American foreign policy had led to 9/11, and every indication pointed to one conclusion: those dominant ideas, unless rejected, would subvert the U.S. military response and our national security. America is a military superpower, but it lacks the self-confidence and moral certainty needed to understand and fight for its own self-defense.

Tragically our analysis—articulated in countless ARI op-eds, essays, media interviews, talks—has proved correct.

We argued that properly conceptualizing the enemy—identifying its character, its goals—is necessary in order to defeat it. Our enemy is defined, not primarily by their use of terrorist means, but by their ideological ends. They fight to create a society dominated by Islamic religious law. We call the movement Islamic totalitarianism—a cause long inspired and funded by patrons such as Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states and, above all, Iran. Yet the last two administrations not only failed to define the enemy, but evaded this responsibility. Witness the destructive consequences all around you. Over time the necessity of understanding the enemy has only grown more urgent.

We argued that a proper war is one fought in self-defense to safeguard the individual rights of Americans. We argued that such a war must seek to eliminate the objective threats to our lives, using all necessary force. Yet Bush’s supposedly “muscular” policy was in fact animated by “compassion” and the allegedly moral ideal of selfless service to the needy. That’s true of the overarching goal of Bush’s crusade for democracy—giving the needy and oppressed of the Middle East the vote—and of its implementation on the ground. Far from unleashing a “shock and awe” campaign, Washington engaged in “nation building” and subjected our soldiers to absurd, self-sacrificial battlefield constraints. Those same constraints on our soldiers—stemming from the doctrines of Just War Theory and embodied in international norms of war—persist under Obama’s administration.

We identified the predictable consequences of the ideas shaping America’s foreign policy. Our forward-looking assessments were proven correct.

The democracy crusade, we argued, would empower jihadists across the Middle East. It did; see Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Egypt, the Palestinian territories.

On the battlefield the self-effacing rules of engagement, we argued, would encourage the Iraq insurgency and the remnants of the Taliban. They did.

We argued that the widely celebrated “surge” in Iraq—deploying thousands more U.S. soldiers to quell the insurgency through bribes and appeasing gestures—could only paper over, not end, the fundamental enmities and that more violence would return. It did.

Allowing insurgents to go undefeated, we warned, would enable the most vicious, effective killers to survive and reemerge. They did; one such insurgent group became the core of Islamic State.

The policy of appeasement, we argued, would only empower such

enemies as Hamas and Hezbollah. It did; witness the Islamist-Israeli wars in 2006, 2008/9, 2012, 2014.

We argued that the prevailing response to the Danish cartoons crisis was pathetic. The West's inability to uphold so vital a right as the freedom of speech, we warned, would further inspire the jihadists. It did; recall *Charlie Hebdo*.

The diplomatic outreach to Iran, begun under Bush and consummated by Obama's team, would further encourage the standard bearer of the jihad, the Iranian regime; a nuclear deal—we warned a decade before it was signed—would fuel Iran's hostility. It did.

From the outset, we at ARI spelled out what a real war actually looks like; we highlighted the sharp contrast between that and the supposedly "tough" policy of the Bush administration in Iraq and Afghanistan. The wrong lesson, we warned, would be to regard Bush's (policy) failure as discrediting the use of military force in self-defense. That misconception, however, is now pervasive. Many (wrongly) believe that our military—despite being unrivaled—is ineffectual and, if used, counterproductive. We warned that that insidious premise was leading America to disarm itself, even as threats mount. And indeed that premise goes a long way to explaining how Obama's nuclear deal with Iran was seen as even remotely plausible. Obama posed the alternatives as another Middle East war—*another Iraq*—or the Iran deal. If "war" means another quagmire, everyone should reject it.

From the outset, we at ARI exposed the perverse ideas about morality that permeated, and therefore subverted, U.S. foreign policy. We warned that by subordinating military victory to allegedly moral constraints, Washington's policy would undermine our national security. The ruinous consequences of that policy abound.

What makes ARI's approach distinctive—and why our analysis has been borne out—is the intellectual framework that we embrace: Ayn Rand's philosophy of Objectivism. Thus our work fits in none of the conventional categories, such as conservative, libertarian, progressive, "realist", "isolationist," neoconservative. That ARI's perspective on U.S. foreign policy has been borne out is a testament to the real-world value of our philosophic framework. Objectivism begins by embracing a basic orientation to facts; *reality is*, and in the quest to live we must use our reason to discover reality's nature and learn to act successfully in it. The philosophy's moral code teaches us what is in our self-interest, what produces happiness, and what a proper society looks like. Rand once explained: "I am not primarily an advocate of capitalism, but of

egoism; and I am not primarily an advocate of egoism, but of reason. If one recognizes the supremacy of reason and applies it consistently, all the rest follows.” It is this philosophic outlook that led us to identify and take seriously the threat of Islamic totalitarianism, and then properly conceive what actions our self-defense required.

When looking at the cultural and political events of the day, we at ARI view them in a wider context, we identify issues in fundamental terms, and we recognize the profound role of philosophic ideas in shaping the world. We take our function to be in line with Ayn Rand’s conception of the proper role of intellectuals in society: “The intellectual is the eyes, ears and voice of a free society: it is his job to observe the events of the world, to evaluate their meaning and to inform the men in all the other fields.” This is the role all of ARI’s intellectuals—whether writing on philosophy, foreign policy, law, economic issues—seek to live up to everyday, whereas our culture’s leading intellectual voices have long ago abandoned it.

The major presentation of our view of what went wrong after 9/11 is *Winning the Unwinnable War: America’s Self-Crippled Response to Islamic Totalitarianism*, edited by Elan Journo. In that book of in-depth essays, we show how conventional, dominant ideas about morality subverted American security.

The present book *echoes* that theme, but it conveys ARI’s distinctive philosophic viewpoint in bite-size portions. In the op-eds, essays, blog posts, and interviews that we selected for inclusion here, you will see how irrational philosophic ideas warped foreign-policy thinking and crippled us in action. The argument laid out in *Winning the Unwinnable War* focuses on the George W. Bush administration, and part 1 of this book spans that period. Parts 2 through 4 cover the Obama years. That wider scope, subsuming two quite different administrations, only serves to underscore the profound impact of philosophic ideas in foreign policy, regardless of who sits in the Oval Office. You will also learn that victory is achievable—if we take certain necessary steps (a detailed account can be found in *Winning the Unwinnable War*). Part 5 sketches out how an Objectivist approach to foreign policy stands apart in today’s intellectual landscape.

We at ARI fight for a future of reason, individualism, and freedom. We ask you to join us. How? The book’s final section, “What You Can Do,” provides concrete suggestions. Read, watch, listen to the recommended ARI content—then distribute it to others and speak up for your ideas and values.

Join us, and your support will multiply ARI's impact and fuel our mission. We make people aware of the philosophy of Objectivism because we believe that Objectivism is indispensable for understanding the world, defining values, and achieving one's own happiness. To convey that, we educate people about Rand's philosophy and we spotlight Objectivism's cash value in an individual's life and in society. From that philosophic perspective, we write and speak about crucial political-cultural issues of the day. What you'll find in the pages that follow is that the arena of U.S. foreign policy offers stark, life-and-death illustrations of the value of Objectivism for understanding the world and guiding our action.

Can we end the Islamist menace and secure our right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness on earth? Yes—easily—if we adopt the right ideas.

ELAN JOURNO

ONKAR GHATE