

Nóra Pákozdi – Marcell György Pintér:

REVIEW OF “DEFEATING JIHAD: THE WINNABLE WAR”

Written by Dr. Sebastian Gorka and published by Regnery Publishing on 11th April 2016, the premise of the book is that Jihad can be viewed and analysed with a way of thinking predominant during the Cold War, and defeated accordingly. The topic of the book is highly relevant, as it offers solutions to a world-wide threat that is increasingly problematic and that has grown to be the most popular concern of the world today.

Gorka’s book aims at presenting the history and present of Jihadism as well as finding a means to defeat the threat. The measures offered are relevant and may be effective. The recommendations proposed seem viable. It is widely accepted by experts that the problem exists and is of importance, however, the ideas of appropriate solutions differ. The structure of the book is logically built, and can be followed easily. Nevertheless, there are some minor errors with and misinterpretations of historical facts, which lead to the establishment of false assumptions and conclusions, and one major one that may undermine the whole analysis. When analysing the matter, the book uses a Cold War era approach – particularly with two documents made in that era, the “Long Telegram” by George Kennan, and the NSC-68 –, which, according to the author, even though relying on old and perhaps outdated terminology, can be utilised today as well. Even though it offers solutions, the target group is not the American government but the American people, and for this, it must be evaluated as such: a book for public consumption.

The book was clearly written for an American audience, as it contains recent events of acts of terrorism conducted in the US – and these events regain attention frequently, as a means to move the readers emotionally – and uses them to emphasise and draw attention to the points being made in the book. The book also handles the global problem of terrorism from an American point of view. There are often reoccurring lines, and it frequently returns to previous topics, such as the 9/11 terror attack – presumably for rhetoric purposes.

Despite the modern stereotypes and recommendations against using Cold War strategies, the book tries to prove them wrong by proposing a list of viable measures to take. Among these, the proposal to speak freely and honestly to be able to identify and defeat the enemy as well as the informing and involvement of the population are wise measures to take. Bringing the fight to an ideological front against an enemy also utilising ideological weapons is also to be considered. However, the connection made between the USSR and ISIS is fundamentally flawed by suggesting that Jihadism is just as much a totalitarian regime as the Soviet Union was, as the USSR aspired to extend the borders of socialism/communism to eventually cover the whole world, while terrorism aims at “purging the impure”. Minor errors include factual errors, misinterpretations, and exaggerations, and they lead to false and erroneous conclusions being drawn, affecting solutions proposed.

Unfortunately, there are not many unbiased, reasonable, or neutral reviews on the book. The majority of the reviews speak highly of it, some go as far as calling it a “masterpiece”, however, the book is far from that level of perfection. These reviews tend to be unreliable sources unfamiliar with the subject matter, and praise the book only because of its straightforward nature – which tells much more of actual American politics rather than the book itself. Therefore, for them to claim that the book is enlightening and helpful to understand

the situation makes their reviews questionable. Clearly, the author of the book is a scholar accepted by one side and questioned by the other, and is surrounded by controversies, however, the book should be viewed devoid of political bias. Gorka and this book are the manifestation of recent changes in US politics. Gorka, being born in the United Kingdom to Hungarian parents while also being an American, represents a not solely but chiefly American way of thinking in the current US government as a deputy assistant to the current president.