



Essential Analysis Distracted by Excessive Anecdotes

Kobi Michael

The Institute for National Security Studies—
Tel Aviv University; University of South
Wales, United Kingdom

The War on the West: How to Prevail in the Age of Unreason

Author: Douglas Murray (Hebrew)

Translation: Inbal Aloni

Publisher: Sela Meir

Year: 2025

No. of pages: 304

The War on the West: How to Prevail in the Age of Unreason is a translation of a 2022 book by Douglas Murray, the well-known publicist, interviewee and polemicist who is popular

in the media and on social networks. In this, his eighth book, he tackles the “progressive madness” that has taken hold of the West, and which in his view threatens its very existence. This book was published after another of his books, *The Strange Death of Europe*, which deals with similar issues to those he highlights in the present book, a discussion of migration and its significance for European demography and government policies, and which is leading, he argues, to a demographic and cultural disaster, threatening the existence of Europe as a Western civilization.

Murray chooses to focus on Critical Race Theory (CRT) as the cornerstone of his arguments concerning the ongoing and increasing distortion by liberal-progressive circles of all aspects of the West as a civilization and a culture. The central argument that Murray seeks to establish, in a very anecdotal way by using numerous quotes from tweets and social media posts and with reference to dozens of other events, is that the distorted criticism of the West rests on a world view that identifies the West with white racism and white superiority, the root of all evil. Meanwhile it ignores the historical contexts, the fact that slavery existed in many other places, including the Arab world and even on the African continent, while placing excessive and intensive focus on the phenomenon in the West, and completely ignoring the West’s achievements and its enormous contribution to humanity as a whole.

The opening chapter of the book discusses the theory and its offshoots, which have developed and penetrated all areas of life. What he believes to be a very problematic and twisted theory began in academia, from where it has been translated into patterns of thought and conduct that are seeping into social and political spaces, and adapted for political purposes, whose main elements are toxic and unbalanced criticism of everything represented by the West and absolute denial of any contribution by the Western World to humanity, and which are now threatening the West. For example, Murray refers

The central argument that Murray seeks to establish is that the distorted criticism of the West rests on a world view that identifies the West with white racism and white superiority, the root of all evil.

to the impact of the theory, its developers and followers, on the academic world, on education and schools, on health and welfare systems, on law and order, with the emphasis on police actions, and on the cultural arena.

Murray attempts to undermine the logic of the theory by referring to the fundamental hypocrisy and lack of intellectual honesty of its proponents. For example, by failing to protest injustices and racism in the case of China or Russia or third world countries, or by ignoring racist elements in the teachings of Karl Marx and others who they admire.

Murray appears to have clearly diagnosed the problematic and strongly refuted core of the theory, which he calls “very confused,” when he writes:

They claimed that the powerless cannot be guilty of racism—even if they have prejudices. And in the power structure presented by disciples of critical race theory, without hesitation, they start from the assumption that only white people have power. Therefore only whites can be racist. Blacks cannot be racist, or if they are racist, it’s only because they have internalized whiteness (p. 28).

Chapter two contains a historical survey in which Murray seeks to assess the contributions of the West to humanity as a whole, and together with the obligatory mention of injustices, he writes at length of the light, prosperity, human rights and freedom that the West has brought to the world. In passing he refers to Churchill and other prominent Western leaders, and ridicules the arguments put forward by supporters of CRT, who cite various statements or actions of these leaders that show them in a negative light to their progressive followers, while utterly ignoring their contributions to humanity in general. This chapter praises the West and Western civilization, which is presented as a kind of

alternative foundation from which to refute and ridicule progressive claims.

Chapter two also looks at the history of racism. Murray wishes to persuade us that with regards to racism, there’s really nothing new to add, since this is a human phenomenon that crosses cultural and geographical boundaries, and in his short historical survey of Western civilization, he points to the changes and improvements that critics ignore.

The rest of the chapter deals with the corrections Murray says are needed. He stresses that before embarking on these fixes, it is essential to understand the nature of the problem. Here too he has incisive criticism of the flagbearers of CRT for their inability to distinguish between good and bad, their determination to disregard all the good things contributed by the Western World to the human race, and to ascribe all the world’s ills, with excessive exaggeration, to what they claim is the racism and white supremacy inherent in the West.

Religion and culture are the subjects of chapters three and four, in which Murray explains the judgmental blindness that has gripped the advocates of critical race theory in their attitudes to structural and substantive issues relating to religion (including Islam) and culture. Their hatred of the West interferes with the ability of intellectual and other supporters of CRT to discern the problems and distortions within the religious and cultural arena, and what is worse—they blame any such defects on the evils of the oppressive West.

Nobody denies the importance of thorough, critical and sometimes even very critical consideration of the phenomenon, such as Murray engages in. The extremism and radical approach of CRT proponents have led to the creation of an intellectual cult that has acquired political influence and thus seeped into political and academic institutions, which themselves have become extreme. In this sense, Murray touches the exposed nerves of Western societies, with the emphasis on

America, and takes the bull by the horns, as the representative of the fear and above all anger felt by the opponents of the progressives, who see the so-called progressives as a real threat to traditional nationalism, as well as to the social fabric and even the ability of Western societies to continue existing as before.

He has chosen to make use of countless examples, many of them anecdotal, which readers may be unable to assess in the absence of the broader context, and which lack sufficient empirical basis

Yet after reading this long and detailed book, I am doubtful whether Murray has succeeded, according to academic criteria, in the task he took upon himself. In order to refute a theory, it is necessary to propose an alternative theory that provides an explanatory response to the explanatory weakness of the other, disparaged theory. Murray has not written an academic book, and probably did not intend to do so, and he therefore does not try to refute critical race theory using theoretical or academic tools. He has chosen to make use of countless examples, many of them anecdotal, which readers may be unable to assess in the absence of the broader context, and which lack sufficient empirical basis in research criteria, or at least documentation (beyond references to the sources of the items he cites, many of them from social networks).

The result is a feeling that the choice to use so many examples is intended to compensate for their anecdotal nature, and add weight to the author's central thesis and critique, and the cognitive effect he seeks to create. Murray's numerous examples are indeed shocking, and demonstrate the deeply problematic nature of progressive ideas and the troubling influence of CRT, but he skips over any validation of the findings as significant and material in a broader sense. Although he does provide a long list of examples from a variety of fields, and readers will certainly form a sense that he is dealing with events of a total and broad

systemic nature, yet in the absence of sufficient reference to opposing responses on the one hand, and on the other hand, to the extent to which the events he describes have penetrated the collective social consciousness of the countries concerned and their true effect, it is hard to reach practical conclusions based on the breadth of his material.

Reading the book is tiring, and in some cases even distracting, because of the abundance of details and examples. In most cases, Murray devotes one or two paragraphs to each example and moves on to the next, and in some cases the impression is almost like reading a log of police operations. I found that reading the book was easier and more effective when I changed the order—I started with the introduction and the history section, jumped to the summary, and then went back to the other chapters. It is therefore possible that Murray loses some of his readers along the way and weakens his arguments, with too many trees making it hard to identify the wood.

Douglas Murray, a historian who is scrupulous about visiting areas on which he reports, a kind of investigative journalist, an inquisitive publicist, a man of ideas and a prolific and talented writer, is good at formulating the arguments and exposing the absurd building blocks of critical race theory. In this sense, he is opening the critical discourse that is required of the academic and intellectual sphere, a sphere that has extended the boundaries of its influence into all areas of life, particularly in the United States, to the point of tyranny and blindness, thus laying the foundation for dangerous social anarchy and blunting the foundations of Western society. Murray is indeed doing important and even anxiety-promoting groundwork, which is bound to make many readers feel uncomfortable, for a debate on the limits of progressivism and the limits of discourse and collective action in Western society.

The book is certainly a kind of guide or even wake-up call for critical thinking about a critical

theory, whose fanaticism and extremism have made the Western World one-dimensional, flat, distorted, and morally hollow, where every social evil and all political and social conduct can be blamed on the structural racism of the West, white supremacy, and anyone who is unable to understand the greatness of CRT and the light it embodies.

To sum up, this is a book that deals with an important issue, which is at the heart of the sociopolitical, intellectual and even existential experience of the Western World. It is broad in scope with an abundance of examples, some of which are certainly worrying and demand consideration, as they indicate the problematic nature of CRT and its derivatives. The writer recognizes the existence of racism as a phenomenon found in every human society, country and culture, but maintains that the excessive and unbalanced focus on white society by CRT's proponents, which completely ignores historical contexts and the universal, cross-cultural nature of racism, has become an obsession and an illogical and unreasonable

He is opening the critical discourse that is required of the academic and intellectual sphere, a sphere that has extended the boundaries of its influence into all areas of life, particularly in the United States, to the point of tyranny and blindness, thus laying the foundation for dangerous social anarchy and blunting the foundations of Western society.

persecution, which threatens the West. Murray is an energetic and determined critic of CRT and what he believes are its problematic and dangerous effects and highlights the absurdity of some of its claims. The book is therefore thought provoking and arouses feelings of discomfort and even concern. It is certainly worth reading, but with an appropriate critical approach.

Prof. Kobi Michael is a senior researcher at the Institute for National Security Studies, and a guest professor at the International Centre for Policing and Security at the University of South Wales in the UK. kobim@inss.org.il