Lay Down Your Weaponization

**Inside View by Andy Kessler**

If I had aa nickel for every time, I read that something is “Weaponize,” I could buy my own bazooka. We may have reached “peak DEI,” but we’re not even close to “pack weaponization.”

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Last week president Biden accused republicans discussing the open border of “weaponization an issue to score political points.” Donald Trump posted on Truth Social: “By weaponizing the DOJ against his Political Opponent, “ME, Joe has opened a giant Pandora’s Box.” The Chronicle of Higher Education, along with many other publications, suggested that the “weaponization of plagiarism” led to Harvard President Claudine Gay’s resignation. The New York Times says that by attacking Ukraine’s power grid, Russia weaponized the cold. Really/

“Weaponized information” is all the rage: fake news, disinformation, propaganda. The University of Noth Carolina at Charlotte defines it as “an attack to create harm, change beliefs or behavior and support the goals of the attacker.” We used to call it lying, but oh well, this new term sounds like something that could receive massive research grants. The RAND Corp, a think tank with annual spending exceeding $3550 million, published a paper titled “The Weaponization of Information: The Need for Cognitive Security.” See what I mean?

In 1939 the scholar Max Lerner wrote the book “Ideas Arre Weapons,” by which he hoped to inspire exiled writers – he was a refugee from Russia –to use their writing against fascism, Lerner opened the door to non-weapon weaponization. The rush through that door has become a thundering herd.

A headline blare: “Weaponized Narrative Is the New Battlespace.” Author Clifford Bob complains of “weaponize rights.” By blaming addiction for your bad behavior, you can “weaponize your mental health.”

I’ve seen people accused of both “weaponizing the climate crisis” and “weaponizing the vulnerability to climate change,” though I run a little hot and cold on which is dumber. And remember, last BlackRock CEO Larry Fink stopped using the term ESG because it has “been entirely weaponized.”

Is anything safe? Inn 2020 Michael Sandel published the book “The tyranny of Merit,” suggesting that college degrees have been “weaponized.” When merit is weaponized, nothing is off limits. `Including the opposite: A new entry in the corporate-jargon sweepstakes accuses lazy workers of weaponizing incompetence, which means doing sloppy work or feigning ignorance so that tasks get assigned to others. Similarly, I will admit that, for the life of me, I can’t figure out all the dials and buttons on our washing machine.

Somewhere in all this lies the truth. Or maybe not. University of Pennsylvania history professor M. Susan Lindee is on YouTube with a “60-Second Lecture: on “weaponizing Truth.” I’ll save you the lecture, which runs more than three minutes –it has something to do with science not having emotions.

The New York Times ran a guest essay declaiming against true-crime TV shows. The author wrote of her murdered sister that a “pollical narrative” had “weaponized her innocence.” I suppose that’s true, but couldn’t she have simply said “exploited”? I’d probably be more sympathetic.

And there lies my annoyance. By using the word “weaponizing” writers are strengthening, exaggerating, magnifying, embellishing and, what the heck, weaponizing the word.

There are plenty more examples. As the U.S. led a global coalition to put financial sanctions on Russia for its invasion of Ukraine, some cried that the coalition was weaponizing the dollar and global finance. Actually, in this use case, the word works. It’s war!

In 2010 Georgetown foreign service professor Rochelle Davis wrote about Iragqn d using “Culture as a Weapon System.” And now we have culture wars as well. The Select Subcommittee on the Weaponization of the Federal Government, chaired by Ohio Rep. Jim Jordan, was initially started to investigate the online suppression of conservative thought. But the committee, with subpoena power has been, pardon me, weaponized to investigate just about anything it wants.

And I found this strange: Seattle residents were up in arms over plans to build a kid’s playground at a park with a long-time nude beach. Opponent Milo Kusold told the Seattle Times that the proposed playground was, you guessed it, “weaponization of children.” C’mon now.

I am weaponizing this column against weaponizing the word “weaponizing.” It’s something worth fighting for.