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With Us or Against Us: Rhetoric, which is part and parcel of political speech-making, is still vulnerable to the ancient criticism of Plato that it is too concerned with the means of persuasion rather than the framing of good argument itself. One species of rhetoric identified by Aristotle, the enthymeme, commonly features an unstated premise, the veracity of which is a probable rather than an established truth. A comparison with actual policy would show that rhetoric can have a contested relationship with reality. This essay offers an analysis of this rhetoric to see what it seeks to persuade Muslims to do, what its unspoken premises are and which categories it uses to mobilise Muslim sentiment. In fact the evidence is that, if used, this terminology is quickly modified or retracted. The most famous example is George W. It could also be argued that this crude form does not necessarily represent the most prevalent view among American and British political elites either. The crude form has some historic pedigree. With the fall of the Berlin Wall, a new Muslim enemy comes to be constructed by right-wing academics, policy-makers and politicians associated with the neo-conservative wing of the Republican party. The story is too well-known to be rehashed here at any great length. At the end of the Cold War, conflict would no longer be an ideological clash between communism and liberal capitalist democracy but based on civilisational conflict. Instead, after the Iranian Revolution of , there was a revision so that religion could still play a part in political conflict, and this was seen in a negative and combative way. These are different civilisations and they are destined to clash on the basis of value-difference. The crude version relies on persistently asking the question: Muslims are judged by the most extreme adherents of their faith, whereas Christian extremists are exceptional. The Muslim world and Europe have had a deeply enmeshed interaction, which certainly cannot be defined as characterised largely or solely by conflict. Yet this deep interaction is written out of European history and self-definition. Instead, it is written only as a relationship of rivalry and conflict, but with no proper assessment of long periods of peaceable co-existence or of profound cultural interchange. In particular, there is the huge legacy of late medieval and philosophical Muslim thought later drawn on by European Jews and Christians to create the modern West. Neither the Muslim nor the Christian historical path can be fully understood without relation to the other. The terrible treatment of Jews in Europe did not prevent, after the Holocaust, the development of an idea of Judeo-Christian civilisation, emphasising what was held in common. There is no reason why commonalities between the Muslim world and the West should not be similarly achieved, despite the current round of conflict. Sayres Rudy provides one of the best current analysis of this form, and his work has heavily informed much of this section. The reason for this is that there are some aspects of Islam that turn normal grievances into exceptional, anti-human ideologies and actions like suicidal terrorism on the part of a delusional and inexcusable minority of Muslims. In more detail, the argument goes something like this: Islamist terrorists do not share political or economic grievances; 2. Islamist terrorists do share cultural grievances; 3. Thus, Islamist terrorists overreact to cultural grievances. America boasts a liberal-democratic-secular culture; 2. Islamists oppose liberal-secular-democratic culture; 5 Thus Islamist terrorism against the U. This is a subset of the general argument that the discontent caused by the disparities produced by globalisation used interchangeably with modernisation here creates religious fundamentalism. This sort of bifurcation of complicated Muslim individuals into either moderates or extremists appears at present to have little end in sight. The open-endedness of the war on terrorism, with its policing, legal strictures, and military ventures abroad, offers up the prospect of social re-engineering on a grand scale. However, it is certainly arguable that even if Islamism is separated from Islam and is set up in opposition to a U. Even if it is seen as the exception to the norm of Islam, violent Islamism is still seen as pervasive within the House of Islam. Of course, the occupation of Iraq has made that argument more difficult to sustain because it could in many ways be characterised as an insurgency with features in common with anti-imperialism anywhere. The distinction made between good and

bad Muslims often gets replicated and mapped onto ancient and modern sectarian divisions in the Muslim world. But there are other forms too. Another is to support establishment ulema against anti-establishment Islamist movements in places like Egypt. None of these add up to a consistent view of the internal debates within Islam, and betray an inherent flexibility suited to changing political purpose, e. Unlike Europe, which has historically defined itself in many periods against its Muslim neighbour, the United States has represented itself as a form of universalism, as a civilisation that is the right template for everyone. President Bush in a State of the Union address in reflects this sentiment: The cause we serve is right, because it is the cause of all mankind. The momentum of freedom in our world is unmistakable and it is not carried forward by our power alone. We can trust in that greater power who guides the unfolding of the years. And in all that is to come, we can know that his purposes are just and true. And in their anti-Americanism, they are not true to the real teachings of Islam. As American values are always held to be coherent, beneficent, exportable and humane, there is no legitimate resistance to them. It is worth pointing out, as an aside, that the rhetoric about the exceptionalism of Islamism comes out of the rhetorical justification of American exceptionalism, and a view of its global role in the post-Cold War world. The locus classicus is the National Security Strategy of the United States , which sets out something like a Bush foreign policy doctrine for the world. Of course, such rhetoric is hardly self-sustaining in any self-critical analysis. The consequence of this is that the definition of who is a moderate and who is an extremist becomes ambiguous and unstable. It means that legal definitions of an extremist who takes innocent human life are inevitably mixed up with more general moral judgements made about Muslims, who, while they oppose terrorism, are seen to be illiberal. Thus counter-terrorism arguments get caught up with discussions about national identity and belonging, multiculturalism and integration. Muslims who are moral conservatives come under as much scrutiny as those who actually endorse terrorist violence. This outreach finds important allies among Muslim reformers who agree that received authority taqlid is overemphasised and that more should be done to create the believer who apprehends religion as a series of personalised symbols that may be interpreted flexibly in consonance with the rationales of liberal secular rule. The relationship between text and context should be set by the individual, and not by scholarly consensus. It is of relatively little moment that these reformers may or may not endorse the anti-imperialist critique of the global Left when there is a far bigger debate about the constitution of religious authority within Islam at stake. It is no longer a question of whether something is good or bad, but an additional consideration emerges: Moderation includes combining the interests of continuity and change, acknowledging both fundamental principles and that which is subject to change in religion, avoiding rigidity and elasticity at the same time, and having a holistic understanding of Islam. This requires retaining the claims of tradition, reason and consensus in creative balance, even in this overly-politicised context, where intellectual debates retain their autonomy and integrity, and accusations of impolitic motivation should be set aside to this end. There is still serious puzzlement, and not just manipulative political rhetoric, about where to place the motives of this new terrorism within a traditional framework of nationalist self-determination. In fact, the new terrorism is part of generalised emergence of globalised political protest movements, like the anti-globalisation movement, two decades or so after the emergence of a global neo-liberal economic order. It is not jihad as we know it, but, appropriately, as Slavoj Zizek dubbed it, McJihad. So for the Muslim world, a theological response is probably insufficient. However, while it might be difficult to set a context for political resolution to this new and endless war on terror, the burden of my criticism is that seeking to leave the mode of war for politics is not even being imagined at present. And this failure of imagination therefore devolves into a generalised anxiety that opposes simultaneous loyalty to the nation and to the ummah the Muslim supernational , which is a particularly pressing issue for Muslim minorities of the West, whose loyalties, presently, must first be ascertained before they may be trusted. The other feature that this failure of imagination provokes is a fear of unrestrained and apparently motiveless violence that is stripped of historical context and is reduced to ideology, which casts a pall of fanaticism over all Muslims. It is this presumption that prevents a conversation of humankind, a dialogue within and between civilisations, from eclipsing the partisans and the warmongers on all sides. Columbia University, , 2. The Empire and the Crescent: Amal Press, , Hurst, ,

## 2: The State We are in : Hamza Yusuf Hanson :

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## 3: The State We are in : Aftab Ahmad Malik :

*The Empire and the Crescent Global Implications for a New American Century by Aftab Ahmad Malik, Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi Yahya Birt. Hamza Yusuf Hanson. John Esposito.*

## 4: The American Muslim (TAM)

*Yahya Birt is the author of The State We Are In ( avg rating, 9 ratings, 1 review, published ), British Secularism and Religion ( avg rating.*

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*The State We Are In: Identity, Terror and the Law of Jihad (Introduction By Dr. Tahir Abbas; Edited By Aftab Ahmad Malik).*

## 8: Yahya Birt (Contributor of The State We Are In)

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