

A Rove by Another Name: The Contours of Conservative Hypocrisy

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On this week's [Gorilla Radio](#), M. Junaid Alam will make a return visit. He's a co-founder and editor of the Radical Youth Journal, [Left Hook.org](#). He's also the son of M. Shahid Alam, one of the University professors currently being targeted by right wing media figures and their task masters within the Republican Party's new Core. Here's one reason the shadow-Republicans may dislike hearing what Junaid, and his father have to say.

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Contours of Conservative Hypocrisy: Part One

by M. Junaid Alam

Left Hook.org

It is not controversial to assert that the values, ideals, and opinions held by people on social and political matters vary in accordance with their place on the political spectrum. What if, however, it was posited that on one end of this spectrum, politics consists not only of pursuing stated aims, but also of crafting codewords and rhetoric to lure in others who would not otherwise be interested in those aims? Judging from the output of its vast array of columnists, pundits, and intellectuals, the modern American Right perfectly fits this description.

For it is the rare conservative who will openly declare from the outset that he is in favor of waging war on weaker nations, cutting down safeguards for disadvantaged citizens, heaping aid upon the wealthy, plundering the environment, and so on. Far more common is the conservative who, in pursuing these very same aims, will invoke with much sincerity the cherished terms of security, responsibility, freedom, and optimism. It would be helpful, I think, if we took a look at a few of the very carefully constructed frameworks, codewords, and values invoked by the Right and see how they match up against actual reality.

Terrorism:

This seems straightforward enough: terrorism is the act of terrorizing someone. In a political context, you could terrorize a whole population in myriad ways: kill citizens at random, kill them systematically, steal their land, plunder their resources, imprison them through physical confinement, starve them economically with embargoes or blockades, sabotage their society by installing puppet leaders, and so on.

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But when the Right uses the word "terrorism," they are never referring to anything but the first listed form of terrorism - that is, the form employed some extreme Islamist groups. Needless to say this is a very convenient misappropriation, since all the other forms of terrorism have been and continue to be widely employed by the United States and Israel, with much more destructive results than anything Islamists have been able to inflict.

So for instance, if around 100,000 Iraqis have been killed mostly by US air bombing, that's not terrorism. If 1,000,000 Iraqis died from US-led economic sanctions, that's not terrorism. If thousands of Afghans and Palestinians have been killed by US-made military hardware, like tanks and fighter jets and sniper guns, that's not terrorism.

In the Right's universe, terrorism only happens when a Muslim commits violence. The violence inflicted upon the Muslim, neatly excised from the definition of terrorism, is not reclassified under any other category. It simply slips down the memory hole.

Moral equivalency:

This is a term the Right uses to clean up the contradictions left behind by their distortion of the word "terrorism." For instance, if you talk about foreign civilians killed in the wars we've started to illustrate that we too have committed terrorism, that's called "moral equivalency" - the equating of non-American lives with American ones, an apparent crime under the moral rubric of conservatism. Likewise, pointing out that many more Palestinians than Israelis have been killed (not to mention occupied, tortured, expropriated, etc.) in that conflict is also "moral equivalency" - committing the sin of assigning non-white, non-Western life the same worth as that accorded to Israeli life.

The exchange rate for American-Israeli life vis-?-vis Arab-Muslim life varies depending on the conflict and time period. Looking at 9-11 casualties (3,000) versus Iraqi casualties for this war (100,000) the going rate is around 33:1 - every 33 of their innocents killed matters as much as every one of ours. Of course, that would assume someone saying Americans and Muslims have both attacked each other "equally" - a position the shrill American Right would be loathe to consider.

Usually the bare logic of this expression is concealed with concocted moral outrage over the

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specific method used by the enemy - suicide attacks, beheadings, and guerrilla war. So supposedly killing a civilian from the safety of your tank or airplane is more morally sound than blowing yourself up, and being caught by a reporter on camera shooting a wounded person lying on the ground is better than videotaping killing a person yourself. Exacting standards, no doubt.

Freedom:

No word has fallen prey to political evisceration more than this one. Certainly it has inspiring connotations, but in reality you can have the "freedom" to live without fear as well as the "freedom" to impose fear on somebody else. You can be free from killing, or free to kill. The dual capacity of this word is very useful for the Right.

For instance, it can justify breaking unions by giving workers the "freedom" to not join unions, even though unions are historically a major gain for the working class in the struggle against employers' power, and the economic data clearly shows unionized workers have fared much better than their non-unionized counterparts in terms of pay, benefits, and job security.

Heralded with similar misty-eyed melodramatics is the "freedom" afforded by "free" market solutions to economic issues. After all, what better prescription for a problem than to grant "freedom"? Of course, here we mean freedom for businessmen to control the fate of everyone working under them without bearing any serious personal consequences themselves. So much for "taking responsibility."

Look out for a break down of that phrase and others in the upcoming Part Two.

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[Contours of Conservative Hypocrisy: Part Two](#)