only problem is that they rule out the colonial period as an artificial imposition, as a departure from an authentic history. Preoccupied with a search for and a return to origins, they tend to freeze the past in the precolonial period. This search also determines their notion of the colonial period: the Hutu nationalists think of the colonial period as the period prior to Tutsi migration, and the Hindu nationalists tend to think of it as the period prior to the Turkish invasions and the Islamic conversions. As a result, they underestimate—or sometimes fail to understand fully—the present by ignoring how the institutional and intellectual legacy of colonialism tends to be reproduced in the present.

I do acknowledge the importance of the nativist critique that calls for a fuller grasp of historicity, but one also needs to understand its weakness, because its sense of historicity is compromised by its search for authenticity. The point is not just to sidestep the nativist critique but to sublate it, in the manner in which Engels understood sublating Hegel in his critique of Ludwig Feuerbach; to take into consideration that which is relevant, effective, and forceful in the critique but at the same time to break away from its preoccupation with origins and authenticity.

You begin your book, Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror, *with a discussion of Fanon and his insistence that the proof of the native's humanity consisted not in the willingness to kill settlers in a colonial context, but in the willingness to risk his or her own life. Are you suggesting that we should read contemporary acts of terrorism in a colonial frame, or at the very least as the violence of yesterday's victims, of victims who have become killers?*

To understand terrorism, we need to go beyond self-defense, beyond the violence of liberation movements, beyond the violence of anticolonial struggles and liberation movements. To understand nonstate terror today, we need to understand the historical relationship between state terrorism and nonstate terrorism. There is a clear and discernible historical dynamic: during the Cold War, state terror was parent to nonstate terror, and, having given rise to nonstate terror, it has then proceeded to mimic it—as, for instance, in the "War against Terror."

Fanon of course was not talking just about terror. Fanon was primarily talking about the relation between political violence and political modernity, between violence and freedom, so that those convinced that freedom was a value *higher* than life were willing to sacrifice life for freedom. Fanon went beyond Hegel. Modern man—and woman—is not simply

willing to die for a cause higher than life, as Hegel said. He and she, for Fanon, are also willing to kill for that cause.

These two aspects of our political modernity seem to come together in the suicide bomber. The suicide bomber, however, has been widely understood in the Western media as a throwback to premodernity, either as adult irrationality or as a response of adolescents coerced by patriarchal authority. I think this explanation may be too easy and too self-serving. The reality is more likely the opposite: the suicide bomber is more likely born of a youth revolt than of patriarchal authority. The suicide bomber comes out of the history of the Intifadah. The first Intifadah in Palestine was coterminous with the Soweto uprising in South Africa. Both were testimony to youth revolts on two fronts: against both external authority—such as apartheid or the Zionist order—and the internal authority of the generation of their parents, a generation they saw as having capitulated to external authority by accepting the conditions of apartheid and occupation as normal. It is not very different from American youth during the civil rights and the antiwar movements of the 1960s. This is how I recall Bob Dylan's ode to the youth of the 1960s:

> Come O Mothers and Fathers of the land
> Get out of the way if you can't lend a hand
> Your sons and daughters are beyond your command
> For the times they are a-changing.

The point about the Vietnam War is that it ended, and so did apartheid with the end of the Cold War. The only thing that has not ended is the occupation in Palestine. Instead, it has turned into what George W. Bush called "facts on the ground," a brutal reality. The failure of the older generation to find a humane alternative in Palestine in part explains the desperation of the younger generation, resorting to violence in politics. Even then, we need to recognize that the term suicide bomber is a misnomer. The suicide bomber is a category of *soldier* whose objective is to kill—even if he or she must die to kill.

You repeatedly emphasize the importance of distinguishing between cultural (or religious) identity—what you call Culture Talk—and political identity. Why is this distinction necessary to understanding present debates regarding terrorism? To what extent does Culture Talk enable violence against particular peoples?

It is essential to make this distinction in an era of nationalism and the nation-state; in other words, in an era where the claim that cultural communities should be self-determining—meaning they should have their own state (with the "self" in self-determination a cultural self)—is considered obvious and normal, something that does not require an explanation. It is important to recognize that the raw material of political identities may be taken from the cultural sphere—common language, common religion, and so on—but once these identities are crafted into *political* identities, enforced within a territorial state, and reproduced through the mechanism of the law, which in turn recognizes its bearers as particular subjects, then identity becomes rather more complicated. It becomes extremely important to distinguish between political and cultural identity because political identity, unlike cultural identity, as enforced by the state through law, is singular, it is unidimensional: "You are this and nothing else." Whereas cultural identity is not only multiple but also cumulative, and it is not really territorial—something now widely acknowledged. It may have a territorial resonance, but it is not reducible to a territorial dimension, nor is it reducible to power. Political identity, on the contrary, is enforced through law and is an effect of power. I would even go further and say that, even in the case of resistance, its starting point is none other than political identities reproduced through the legal regime. This is notwithstanding the fact that there is a world of difference between resistance that reproduces political identities, whether in the name of reform or revenge, and resistance that sublates the political order by forging new political identities.

Could you explain the origins of the title, Good Muslim, Bad Muslim*? Is it not the case that the United States—or the West generally—should be supporting moderate, secular forces within the Muslim world to counteract extremist, fundamentalist currents?*

Even when Bush speaks of "good" Muslims and "bad" Muslims, what he means by "good" Muslims is really *pro-American* Muslims, and by "bad" Muslims he means *anti-American* Muslims. Once you recognize that, then it is no longer puzzling why *good* Muslims are becoming *bad* Muslims at such a rapid rate. You can actually begin to think through that development. If, however, you think of "good" and "bad" Muslims in cultural terms, it is mind-boggling that in one week, you can have a whole crop of "bad" Muslims—cultural changes do not usually happen with such rapidity! But if you have the aerial bombing of Falluja and the

targeting of civilian populations accused of hosting "bad" Muslims, then you harvest an entire yield of bad Muslims at the end of the day, and the whole phenomenon becomes slightly less puzzling.

This is connected to my claim that political identities are not reducible to cultural identities. Political Islam, especially radical political Islam, and even more so, the terrorist wing in radical political Islam, did not emerge from conservative, religious currents, but on the contrary, from a *secular* intelligentsia. In other words, its preoccupation is *this*-worldly, it is about power in this world. To take only the most obvious example: I am not aware of anyone who thinks of Osama bin Laden as a theologian; he is a political strategist and is conceived of in precisely such terms. Of course, part of his strategy is employing a particular language through which he addresses specific audiences.

Why do you insist on using the term "political Islam" rather than the more common "Islamic fundamentalism"? Do the two not gesture at the same phenomenon?

I have doubts about the use of the term "fundamentalism" outside of the context in which it arises, which is the Christian context. My real discomfort with using the two interchangeably—political Islam and Islamic fundamentalism—is that "fundamentalism" is a *cultural* phenomenon and I want to zero-in on a *political* phenomenon.

Even in the history of American Christianity, Christian fundamentalism is a turn-of-the-century movement that was the result of battles fought out in all kinds of institutions, including schools and courts. But the decision by a group of Christian fundamentalist intellectuals to cross the boundary between the religious and the secular and to move into the political domain, to organize with an eye on political power, is only a post–Second World War phenomenon. I distinguish between Christian fundamentalism, an end-of-nineteenth-century countercultural movement, and political Christianity, a post–Second World War political movement.

I also do not identify the mixing of religion and politics as necessarily retrogressive. One only needs to understand the many forms of postwar political Christianity, from the involvement of black churches in the civil rights movement to that of Jerry Falwell's Christian Right, to get to a more nuanced understanding of religiously informed politics.

One also needs to recognize that the history of Christianity is very unlike the history of mainstream Islam, which simply does not have an

institutionally organized church. The Catholic Church is organized as an institutionalized hierarchy, as a prototype of the empire-state, and the Protestant Church hierarchy is organized as a prototype of the nation-state. Until Ayatollah Khomeini created a statewide clerical authority in Iran, there was no such institutionalized religious hierarchy in Islam, and it still does not exist elsewhere. Without the existence of an institutionalized religious hierarchy parallel to a state hierarchy, the question of the proper relation between two domains of power, that of the organized church and the organized state, a central question in Western secularism, has been a nonquestion in Islam—at least until Ayatollah Khomeini created a constitutional theocracy in Iran as *vilayat-i-faqih*.

Now with Iraq very much in the throes of resistance, there is an entirely different notion of Iraqi Shi'ism articulated by Sistani. His is a critique of Khomeini; Sistani's is a secular, religious perspective. His view is that Shi'a clerics are scholars; they should be the conscience of society, not the wielders of state power.

So when political Islam develops—unlike political Christianity—it is not the result of the movement of religious intellectuals into a secular domain but rather the reverse move, that of secular intellectuals into the religious domain. Extremist political Islam, by which I mean Islamist thought that puts political violence at the center of political action, came into its own with Mawdudi and Syed Qutb. Neither was an alim or a mullah. Both had *this*-worldly pursuits. Mawdudi says, "*Mere* preaching will not do, it is not enough." Now which religious person is going to say *mere* preaching is not enough?

You argue in the book that "The shift from a reformist to a radical agenda in political Islam is best understood in the context of the transition from colonialism to postcolonialism." Can you explain what you mean by this?

I tried to understand the movement away from Jamaluddin al-Afghani, Jinnah, Mohammad Iqbal, from a time when the project of political Islam was to bring more and more Muslim peoples into the political arena, to increase political participation through mass mobilization. I tried to understand the shift from the politics of mass mobilization to its radical opposite whereby a form of political Islam emerges that is allergic to mass movements, that is modeled on the notion of creating small, conspiratorial groups, almost as if it were a caricature of the Leninist idea, "better fewer but better": evoking the picture of tiny groups in smoke-filled rooms, strategizing in the late hours of the

night, not accountable to anybody. After all, does not the use of a religious idiom in politics, whether by bin Laden or by Bush, make heaven the arbiter, so there is no accountability in this world? President Bush said recently that freedom is God's gift to human beings, and that it is America's responsibility to spread it!

The shift from creating a state in a Muslim-majority society to creating an ideologically Islamic state began in Pakistan under Zia. Similarly, the construction of an ideologically Jewish state in Israel began under Begin. Coincidentally, both projects unfolded as part of a larger, global American Cold War project. We should not underestimate the importance of the shift from an Islamic state as a state of actually existing Muslims to an *Islamist* state as one whose mission is to enforce an agenda on the population so as to make of them true believers.

Whereas the quest for an Islamic state in a Muslim-majority society began in the colonial period, that for an ideologically Islamist state was more of a postcolonial phenomenon. It was born of a critique of political Islam as a societal project that yielded no more than a banal nation-state in a Muslim-majority society. Mawdudi could turn to Jinnah's Pakistan and say this was "Na-Pakistan" (literally, not Pakistan, or the Land of the Impure) as though to say, "What is this? We did not mean a banal nation-state, we meant something else."

The term "collateral damage" has become ubiquitous in the American media as a euphemism for the unintended victims of U.S. military operations. In your book, you make a connection between collateral damage and the spread of terrorism. Could you outline here the contours of that argument?

Collateral damage makes a distinction between victim and target. Victims are not necessarily the target. If you need to drain the entire tank to target the fish, so be it. The damage is regrettable but it is collateral. It is the language of power, it is the language of an *exclusive* focus on power, of a premeditated, wholly preoccupied focus on power, and it is not surprising that this language emerges in the late Cold War. Terror emerges as a strategy of the United States after defeat in Vietnam, when it is on the verge of losing the Cold War. The strategy comes to a head with the Reagan administration, which throws overboard the language of "peaceful coexistence," now demanding an agenda to "roll back" the Soviet Union.

You argue in the book that it was U.S. policy in the Reagan years to support terrorist movements across the Third World, from Mozambique and Angola

to Nicaragua and Afghanistan, in an attempt to quash militant nationalism—then equated with Soviet expansionism—with no American loss of life. You point especially to the transition from counterinsurgency to low-intensity conflict and the shift in the locus of the Cold War from Europe to the Third World during the 1980s, both as significant reorientations of U.S. war strategy. What was the significance of these changes for the global spread of terrorism?

I focus on what I call the late Cold War, which I date from the American defeat in Vietnam to the most recent invasion of Iraq. After defeat in Vietnam, the United States was faced with opposition to overseas military intervention, both at home and abroad. Kissinger was the first to respond to this changed international context. The year the Vietnam War ended, 1975, was the year the Portuguese empire collapsed. The center of gravity of the Cold War shifted from Southeast Asia to southern Africa, where the former Portuguese colonies of Mozambique and Angola became independent. Kissinger looked for a pragmatic solution. Unable to intervene directly, the United States looked for proxies. If the United States could not intervene itself, it would have to find others to intervene on its behalf. Kissinger first tried this in Angola with South African intervention, but it did not work. The day it became known, that very day it was discredited.

Ronald Reagan ideologized proxy war in a religious idiom. Reagan ideologized the Cold War as a war against "evil," against the "Evil Empire." His speech about the Evil Empire was first made to an annual gathering of American evangelicals. I think it is very important that we be clear about the political uses of "evil": you cannot coexist with evil, you cannot convert evil, you have to *eliminate* evil. In that titanic battle, any alliance is justified.

The first alliance, which lasted throughout Reagan's two administrations, was with apartheid South Africa, what was called "constructive engagement." It was under the American protective umbrella that apartheid South Africa created Africa's first genuine terrorist movement: Renamo in Mozambique, which was genuinely terrorist in the sense that it was not interested in fighting the military, its focus was on targeting civilians as a way of demonstrating that an independent African government was incapable of protecting its citizens, spreading fear. America's responsibility in Mozambique was not direct but indirect. It did not provide direct assistance to Renamo, but it did provide a political cover to apartheid South Africa for over a decade as South Africa nurtured, from scratch, a genuinely terrorist movement in an independent African country.

Whereas the United States was an understudy in Mozambique, its embrace of terror became direct and brazen after the Sandinista Revolution of 1979. In Nicaragua, the United States created a terrorist movement called Contras, more or less as apartheid South Africa had created Renamo in Mozambique, also from scratch. The lessons the United States learned from southern Africa and Central America were put into practice in Afghanistan in the concluding phase of the Cold War.

You say that "The Reagan administration took two initiatives that were to have lasting impacts on U.S. foreign policy. The first was to turn to the drug trade for an illicit source of funds; the second was to turn to the religious right to implement those foreign policy objectives that Congress had ruled against, thus beginning a trend toward privatizing war." What were the lasting effects of these developments?

As I traced the history of proxy war, I was struck by how it tended to run alongside another underground development, that of drug trade, whether in Laos, Nicaragua, or Afghanistan. The reason was simple: if you don't declare war, you don't have access to public funds to wage it. The search for funds to wage an undeclared war time and again led the CIA into an embrace of the underworld, particularly the drug lords.

The Afghan war exemplified the extreme development of two tendencies: one, the *ideologization* of war in a religious idiom, and two, its *privatization*. War no longer had national boundaries; the United States was no longer interested in any Islamist group with a national orientation, which it considered too narrow. It wanted internationalist groups, groups committed to an international jihad, groups that could be relied on to join a fight to the finish. In fact, the United States wanted the war to be expanded to include the Muslim populations of the Soviet Union from the outset but backed down because the Soviets threatened to retaliate with an invasion of Pakistan.

With its ideologization, war ceased to be a necessary evil; rather, it became a way of *removing* evil. It became a praiseworthy thing. The ideologization of war was done in heavily religious terms. By the time Afghanistan happened, war was not even conceived as a national project, as with Renamo in Mozambique or the Contras in Nicaragua. The war in Afghanistan was justified as a *global* jihad. To wage it, the CIA recruited volunteers globally; Muslims everywhere, in the United States, in Britain, all over the world, were invited to participate in this global

war. The CIA was busy creating cells everywhere, the nuclei of the same cells they are busy trying to smash today as a network of terror.

The ideologization of war also led to its privatization. The Islamist network was both global and private. What we are reaping today is the whirlwind.

At the time of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, you suggest that the Reagan administration "rescued right-wing Islamism from [a] historical cul-de-sac." How so?

Right-wing Islamism was preoccupied with the question of power and yet was allergic to mass movements. So it had either to embrace existing forms of power—like the Saudi monarchy or the Zia regime in Pakistan—or it would remain a fringe group. It is this cul-de-sac from which the late Cold War and the American strategy rescued it.

What we need to keep in mind is that without the American project it is difficult to see how this group of intellectuals could have translated an ideological tendency into a political project. How, indeed, it could have developed the numbers, the organization, the training, the self-consciousness, the sense of mission, strategy, tactics, and so on, and come out of it with the notion that they, the Islamists, destroyed the Soviet Union, and now it was time to destroy the other superpower. None of this would have been thinkable within the short span of a decade had it not been for American policy after Vietnam and in Afghanistan.

America's relations with Iraq have gone through several phases, all of which you outline in the book, and you argue that the penultimate phase involving the sanctions regime and continual aerial bombardment—before the 2003 military invasion and present occupation of the country—was "nothing short of an officially conducted and officially sanctioned genocide." Is that not too strong a statement?

Well, if you target an entire generation of children, and if studies confirm the fact that indeed the principal victims of sanctions are those below the age of five, and if you choose to continue and in fact *intensify* the sanctions because you have no eyes for the victim, but only for the target, then it is hard to find a more suitable word than genocide to describe this state of affairs.

I should also say that in my view, it is really hard to imagine the sanctions continuing for as long as they did without the complicity of West-

ern media. If mainstream Western media had made it their business to inform their audience about the effects of these sanctions, I cannot imagine the sanctions continuing for as long as they did.

In some sense, the question that pervades much of your argument is: At what cost was the Cold War won? Are you suggesting that the cost of winning the Cold War—definitively with the defeat of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan—was ultimately September 11, 2001?

I do not think the cost was ultimately September 11, 2001, I think the cost is more, much more, and goes well beyond September 11, 2001.

We are sometimes unaware of the ways in which we are shaped by the enemies we choose to fight to the finish. We need to think of the ways in which the United States became like the Soviet Union. We need to remember that America in the 1980s was no longer a classical imperial power, interested in exporting just commodities or capital; America developed aspirations like the Soviet Union: that is, it was interested in exporting entire social systems. America developed an ideologically empowered self-righteousness as it mimicked Marxism-Leninism. America began using multilateral institutions like the World Bank and the IMF to export entire social systems around the world. I know this because Africa was the first place they did it.

When President Bush talks about exporting freedom and not commodities or capital, he is mobilizing his constituency behind the export of a *way of life*. An entire way of life. The America of Bush seems to have no patience with any other way of thinking through the good life. The good life is necessarily American. And if it is not American, then it cannot possibly be good.

So the pluralist project is in danger if the consequences of the Cold War are not clearly understood. September 11 is just the beginning, a blowback from a small, dedicated network. America has been preoccupied with a self-satisfied celebration of victory in the Cold War. There has been an almost total absence of self-criticism with regard to what happened to its own polity as a result. There has been no reflection on the extent to which American society, the economy, the state, were militarized; the extent to which a strong, detached executive power was built up, which has made a mockery of any meaningful democracy; the extent to which the press has come to be intimidated and harnessed internationally as part of the Cold War. All of these issues cry out to be thought

through and addressed. In my view, the possible implications of these are likely to be far more serious than September 11.

Your book also seems to suggest that there is some continuity in American foreign policy from at least the end of the Second World War to the present, and that is a sustained attempt on the part of the United States to subvert militant nationalism wherever in the Third World it appears. During the Cold War, since militant nationalism was synonymous with the possibility of Soviet expansion, the threat to American interests was clear. What potential threat does militant nationalism—as allegedly evinced by Iran or North Korea, for instance—pose to the United States?

You have to ask this question of the American president!

Bush said recently that there is an opportunity to change the world that should be seized, and that Iraq was a threat to the region and therefore was a threat to the United States! So that anything, anywhere, in any part of the world, that moves without American consent presumably turns into a potential threat to the United States that must be removed preemptively before it grows into a real threat. But is it a threat? From which point of view is it a threat? Which is why I said, half in jest only, that you have to ask this question of President Bush. This is the point of view that is America's legacy from the Cold War. This is America mimicking the Soviet Union: there is a correct line, anything that deviates from it is a potential danger, and if it is not squashed early enough it will actually become a *real* danger. Which is of course the logic of preemptive war.

Preemptive war is now part of official American policy, and you suggest toward the end of the book that there is a direct link between the logic of preemptive war and genocide. Could you elaborate this link here?

My last book was on the genocide in Rwanda. When I was writing that book, I was struck by the fact that most genocides happen at the time of war. This, I think, is no mere coincidence. Genocide requires the complicity of significant sections of the population. The emotion most amenable to harnessing such popular complicity is fear. It takes war for the government to convince the population that if you do not kill them, they will kill you. Those who commit genocide think they are doing to others what others will do to them if given half a chance. They have reached the zero-sum point where it is either them or us. And genocide is the logical conclusion of preemptive strikes. War no longer becomes self-defense, or the

category of self-defense is stretched so out of recognition that all violence is rationalized as self-defense.

You suggest in your book that democratic empires are "potentially self-correcting" and warn that one of the effects of U.S. foreign policy since the start of the Cold War has been the systematic erosion of democratic rights at home. What hope do you see of a change in the course of U.S. policy given this fact?

It will have to be a combination of democracy coming to life in the United States and resistance coming to life in the places official America occupies overseas. Without resistance overseas, it is going to be difficult to have an oppositional movement that goes beyond the intelligentsia within the United States.

How do you respond to criticisms that your attempt to explain terrorism perpetrated by Muslims exclusively in terms of politics risks the same mistake as the "cultural" approach because it refuses to acknowledge that one cannot understand such violence discretely, that is, either only in political terms or only in religious terms, that one must take the two together?

I do not claim that one must explain the phenomenon of terrorism exclusively in political terms. Mine is a critique first of all of those who try to explain it exclusively or predominantly in cultural terms because I think it is too convenient to explain political terror by the culture of its perpetrators.

Culture Talk involves a double claim. The first is that premodern peoples possess an ahistorical and unchanging culture, like a badge they wear or a collective twitch from which they suffer. The second is that their politics can be decoded as a necessary and direct effect of this unchanging culture. How convenient and self-serving for official America to explain political terror as an outcome of a terrorist culture without taking into account the changing political contexts and relations to which political terror is a response!

I do not claim in the book that political Islam or the terrorist tendency in political Islam was an American invention. Rather, I argue that as an ideological tendency, political Islam had its own autonomous history, but it was not a linear history that has emerged as a natural outgrowth of Islamic thought. It developed both through debates internal to Islam and through engagement with competing modes of thought. During the late Cold War, that engagement was in particular with Marxism-Leninism, another mode of thought that put political violence at the center

of political action. I was intrigued, indeed struck, by Marxist-Leninist echoes in the thought of Mawdudi, and even more so in that of Syed Qutb, as when Qutb said that he wrote *Signposts* for a vanguard, or when he wrote that we must distinguish between friends and enemies and use reason and persuasion with friends and force against enemies.

It is when I tried to understand how extremist political Islam, particularly its terrorist variant, turned from thought to action, from an ideological tendency to a political movement, that I found it necessary to turn to political analysis. The question that intrigued me was: How did an extreme ideological tendency, the preserve of small groups of intellectuals in the 1970s, turn into political movements that came to occupy the political mainstream in just two decades? To answer that question I had to turn to the late Cold War, to the period after defeat in Vietnam, when America had almost lost the Cold War. The point of the book is that terror is a strategy to which the United States turned to win the Cold War, that nonstate terror was born of state terror, and that Islamist terror represents only the final and concluding outcome in this relationship, that its earlier outcomes, whether with Renamo in Mozambique or the Contras in Nicaragua, have little if anything to do with Islamist terror.

Having said that, I am aware that extremist groups must ideologically justify the centrality of political violence in their tactics. The extreme Islamists must find something in the history of Islam and Islamic thought itself in which to anchor political violence and consequently to develop it. They find it in the notion of jihad, and to do so, they also give that notion a very particular interpretation. So, first of all, jihad ceases to be a broad notion, which is intellectual, social, personal, and political—it becomes exclusively political. Even in the political, it becomes militarized, driven by political violence. Finally, political violence ceases to be about self-defense. Even when it is proclaimed as self-defense, it is no longer different from Bush's notion of self-defense as preemptive: if you are defending yourself in Afghanistan by attacking New York, how is it different from defending yourself in New York by attacking Afghanistan?

The politicization of culture no doubt has important consequences for both culture and politics. To understand these consequences, we need to give up the idea that there is something called premodern culture with an unchanging essence and accept that any living body of thought is driven by debates, internal and external, and that these debates are informed by changing contexts, relations, and issues.