

Who Is Responsible? An Interview with Fred Halliday*

WITH DANNY POSTEL

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Danny Postel: You were involved with *New Left Review* for 15 years but moved away from their worldview. What is your opinion now of where your former comrades are “at”? I’m thinking particularly of your old friend Tariq Ali, whose international popularity has soared since 9/11.

Fred Halliday: I do not now share the major political orientations of the *New Left Review*. I resigned in 1983, after one of the journal’s periodic internal disputes. I find the direction they’ve gone most recently, in the last five to ten years, very disturbing, particularly around the issue of rights. But Tariq and I have known each other for more than 40 years. We were students together in the ’60s. We were active in the opposition to the U.S. war in Vietnam. And we’ve continued to cross paths in the British Left context.

About 20 years ago I said to Tariq that God, Allah, called the two of us to His presence and said to us, “One of you is to go the left, and one of you is to go to the right.” The problem is, He didn’t tell us which was which, and maybe He didn’t know Himself. And Tariq laughed. He understood exactly what I was saying, and he didn’t dispute it.

Danny Postel: What exactly *were* you saying?

Fred Halliday: My view is that the kind of position which the *New Left Review* and Tariq have adopted in terms of the conflict in the Middle East is an extremely reactionary, right-wing one. It starts with Afghanistan. To my mind, Afghanistan is central to the history of the Left, and to the history of the world, since the 1980s. It is to the early 21st century, to the years we’re now living through, what the Spanish Civil War was to Europe in the mid and late 20th century. It was the kitchen in which the contradictions of the contemporary world, and many of the violent evils of the century, were cooked and then spread out. Just as Italian and German fascism trained in Spain for the broader conquest of Europe and the Mediterranean, the militant *jihadi* Islamists, of whom bin Laden was a part, received their training, their primal experiences, in Afghanistan. They have been carrying out this broad *jihad* across the Middle East and elsewhere ever since, including, of course, the attacks of September 11th. You cannot understand this unless you go back to Afghanistan in the 1980s.

But who was responsible? Pakistani intelligence, Saudi Arabia and the United States. Read Bob Woodward's book on Casey, *The Veil*, or Steven Cole's book on Afghanistan, *Ghost Wars*. The U.S. was deeply implicated. My view is that anybody who could not see that issue then, or in retrospect, is objectively on the Right. And I think Tariq is objectively on the Right. He's colluded with the most reactionary forces in the region, first in Afghanistan and now in Iraq. He has given his rhetorical support to the Sunni insurgency in Iraq—who have no interest in democracy or in progress for the people of Iraq whatsoever, whether it's the Baathists, with their record of 30 years of dictatorship, or the foreign Sunnis with their own authoritarian project. The position of the *New Left Review* is that the future of humanity lies in the back streets of Fallujah.

Danny Postel: You mentioned the issue of rights. Where do you and the *New Left Review* diverge with respect to rights?

Fred Halliday: The issue of rights is absolutely central. We have to hold the line at the defense, however one conceptualizes things, however de-hegemonized, of universal principles of rights. This is how I locate my own political and historical vision—it is my starting point. What this means very practically, to cut a long story short, is the issue of intervention. It seems to me that certain interventions in defense of rights are justified—Bosnia and Kosovo, to take two obvious examples, or the defense of the Kurds in Iraq in 1990-1991. The *New Left Review* and others on that wing of the Left attack not just these particular interventions, but the very concept of rights—and are consistent in doing so. My fundamental disagreement with the *Review*, and with Tariq, is really about this.

But something very important happened between Tariq and me, which I think presages broader debates in the late '70s, which was the Communist taking of power in Afghanistan, the subsequent Soviet invasion, and the support of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the U.S. for the Afghan Mujahideen. Having been in Iran, having seen the consolidation of Khomeini's authoritarian regime, having stood on the streets of Tehran and seen 100,000 people shout "Death to liberalism!", having been in the office of Iran's main liberal paper when the Islamists came to close it down—a crucial moment in the consolidation of the Iranian regime—I

was absolutely opposed to any support for the Mujahideen in Afghanistan, which I regarded as a reactionary Islamist project. I had plenty of criticisms of the Afghan Communist regime, but I thought they should remain and reform, and there should be a negotiated withdrawal of the Soviet forces. Tariq's position, on the other hand, was: troops out of Afghanistan, period. In a British context, the analogy is troops out of Ireland, which I also disagree with. If I had to sum up what is for me the bedrock, personal, political experience, it is the Irish question. I grew up in Ireland. I think troops out of Ireland was a completely irresponsible slogan, just as I think troops out of Afghanistan was an irresponsible slogan.

You then had a succession of events in the 1990s which drove a wedge between myself and many people on the Left, both in the U.S. and in Europe and Britain, with whom I'd worked for years. I supported the move to drive Saddam out of Kuwait in 1991. Then there was the Bosnia intervention in 1995 and Kosovo in 1999.

Danny Postel: Afghanistan in 2001.

Fred Halliday: Indeed. So a series of conflicts on which Tariq and I found ourselves on different sides. He took a conventional anti-interventionist position, and I took a more complex position, guided not by the interests of the West but by what I saw as the interests of the peoples in the countries concerned. The issue of whether the U.S. should or should not intervene in a country is a contingent one. Each case has to be debated on its own merits. The key issue is not: Is the U.S. intervening? Nor: What are the U.S.'s motives? The key issue is will that intervention plausibly help those people or not? That's the question.

But this also relates to another issue, which goes back to the *New Left Review* at its best. There was a very famous debate in the early '80s about the nature of imperialism, sparked by a Scottish Marxist called Bill Warren, who wrote a book called *Imperialism, Pioneer of Capitalism*. What Bill argued, against dependency theory, and against facile nativism and facile anti-imperialism, was that not only was it the original position of Marx and Engels in the *Manifesto* and in *Capital*, but that historically, capitalism and imperialism had played a progressive role in transforming the world, in creating new classes, in spreading new ideas, in colonizing

the Americas. And that imperialism has played a contradictory role, that not everything it did has been bad. It fought fascism in the Second World War, for example.

So the mere fact that imperialism was involved in the Kosovo intervention is not a reason to condemn the intervention—you have to have other criteria. It's not that one is in favor of imperialism, but we have to problematize the issue of imperialism. So my disagreements with the *New Left Review* or with much of the U.S. left didn't arise suddenly. And I haven't flaked off to the right. They go back to a history of disagreements, and also to certain important theoretical disagreements.

And they are, to some extent, anchored in the Irish case. Who is responsible for the killing of 5,000 people in Northern Ireland for the last 30 years? Sorry—it isn't only British imperialism. It's the intransigence of two loathing, militarized local communities, the Catholics and the Protestants. The British would love to have left. They've done some terrible things, but they're not responsible for all the killing. The Catholics and the Protestants are responsible, not imperialism.

I feel much happier with a copy of the U.N.D.P. Human Development Report than with the *New Left Review*. Or with the very courageous three annual editions of the Arab Human Development Report, which itemize in a statistical, perhaps over-quantified way, things like women's access to education, women's access to politics, treatment of minorities, freedom of speech, fair elections, and the like.

Danny Postel: “Bourgeois” liberties.

Fred Halliday: No, I don't accept that category.

Danny Postel: I mean that in scare quotes: the crude, ultra-left way of dismissing such rights.

Fred Halliday: Exactly. And Marx himself had too much disparaging language of this kind as well. He doesn't score very well on the issue of rights. Of course Lenin and Stalin and Mao score much worse. But I will barricade myself in my bunker with copies of the U.N.D.P. Report and with Amartya Sen's and Martha Nussbaum's attempts to define new forms

of universal human needs, with feminists who are concretely engaged in social policy, as opposed to academics who are working on reconfiguring epistemology. We're wasting our time.

Let us be clear about it: the U.S. role in international medical and family-planning policy, its opposition to contraception and abortion, and its mishandling of the issue of AIDS—it's criminally irresponsible and will lead to the deaths of many millions of people. George Bush should be indicted for mass murder because of his policies on AIDS. As should the Pope—both this one and the previous ones.

So I'm not enamored of the U.S. policies in principle. Since the '60s I have worked on various aspects of the socialist and anti-imperialist project. I've lived and worked in a number of Third-World revolutionary countries. I did my thesis on the only Arab Communist state, South Yemen. I've lived in Cuba. I've been in Iraq. I've been in Afghanistan. I've been in Syria. I've been in Libya. I was in Nasser's Egypt and Ben Bella's Algeria. I've had quite a consistent interest in these states, and not just when things are going well, but also when things are going badly. I think there's a lot to reflect on when it comes to solidarity with the Third World. I think solidarity is necessary. It's an obligation. I don't think it's a deflection from domestic tasks. But I think that solidarity should be complex, not simple. One should not accept at face value what people who are struggling say: they may well be committing atrocities of their own. At the extreme end you have the PKK, the Shining Path, the Khmer Rouge and so forth. They may often be involved in inter-ethnic conflicts where they use a progressivist language to conceal what is in fact chauvinism towards another community. It goes for both Israelis and Palestinians. It goes for the IRA in Northern Ireland. It goes for the Armenians and the Azeris in Nagorno-Karabakh, and other cases. So solidarity should not be taken at face value. Solidarity should be critical of what people say and do, while also being guided by the longer-term evaluation of people's interests and rights and material social progress. It also involves knowing about these countries. In so much "solidarity" work these days, people don't want to know what's actually going on in Third World countries.

Danny Postel: It tends to be more about the U.S. than about the people on the other side of the equation.

Fred Halliday: Yes. I, for my sins, began life in solidarity with Iran. When I first went to Iran 40 years ago, I was 19. I had in my suitcase a

translation of *Guerilla Warfare* by Che Guervara. I took it through customs, and I had a meeting with somebody in a café in Tehran for 20 seconds at a designated time of day. I gave it to him, and that was the end of that.

To do the work of solidarity, you have to study the history and politics of these countries. One must say when one doesn't agree with the actions of people in the Third World. I disagreed with Khomeini from the start. I certainly didn't support the massacres committed by the revolutionaries in Ethiopia or in Afghanistan when I went there. One must express solidarity but also maintain a critical distance. But that involves knowing about these countries. In so much "solidarity" work these days, people don't want to know what's actually going on in Third World countries. People on the Left didn't want to know what was going on in Iran in the '80s. They didn't want to know what the Khmer Rouge were doing. They don't want to know that the Cuban project is totally bankrupt, and most Cubans wish Castro had died 20 years ago, and now fear that when he does die the island will descend into violence. Most people who support the Palestinians don't want to know that the second Intifada has been a disaster for the Palestinians—it has cost them economically very dearly—or that Arafat was a demagogue and an incompetent, and extremely corrupt. Or that Mao killed more people one way or another than Hitler and Stalin.

There are all sorts of intellectuals who criticize the *New York Times* and the London newspapers and the BBC for stereotyping and essentializing the Third World, which is correct to do. But why don't they ever critique the Third World press? Why don't they ever critique the chauvinism of the Islamists and the politicians in the Middle East? Why do they turn Al Jazeera—which I've appeared on—into some new saintly voice, when actually it's a highly manipulative instrument of an authoritarian state? Let's try and universalize our own allegedly universal principles. And this seems to me a place to start.

Danny Postel: What about the argument that we have to start at home—that we are more responsible for what our governments do because we pay taxes to them? As citizens of the empire, we have more control over what our governments do than what other governments do. How do you respond to that argument?

Fred Halliday: I respond to it by saying that it's a very parochial argument, and inconsistent with internationalism. If women are being denied

their rights in Afghanistan, if innocent civilians are being killed by both the Israelis and the Palestinians, don't we, as citizens of the world, as citizens of countries which are signatories to the U.N. conventions, as people with an international moral conscience—don't we have a responsibility both to speak and to act? Morality does not stop at the frontier's edge. These principles are universal. It doesn't mean that we do it without thinking, without listening. This is a curious contradiction: solidarity can become very parochial when it's only about one side rather than the even-handed application of principles to all sides.

It may, as a pragmatic matter, be that you can influence your own side more. But I also know from working in the Middle East for decades now that if you're in jail in Saudi Arabia or Iran, and you feel you're forgotten, it means a lot to know that there are people in the West who are publicizing your case, who are protesting or sending letters, which never get answered. They just get binned. But people have not forgotten you. People are speaking. It makes a difference.

I think underlying this response is a cop-out. It's the refusal to do the work—the necessary intellectual work of actually knowing what goes on in those countries. It's also a kind of inverted nationalism. We only care about our own governments. Whether Huntington on the Right or Chomsky on the Left, it's the same principle. Nationalism and inverted nationalism: flip sides of the same coin.

Danny Postel: Speaking of Huntington, how do you view his 'clash of civilizations' thesis?

Fred Halliday: It seems to me that there are two very important theses in Huntington which merit discussion calmly and in their own right, but not in the context in which he's presented them. One, which he takes as axiomatic and is absolutely central to his work, is the proposition that states necessarily conflict because we live in an anarchical world. He doesn't waste much time on this in *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, but it's an underlying principle. His starting point isn't really the clash of civilizations but the idea that conflict determines international relations. It's a core assumption of *realpolitik* and one of the pillars on which the book rests. It's a highly contestable proposition. I do

not see the world as necessarily in conflict in this way.

The other key proposition is that culture or civilization—which normally means religion now—is a determinant or major influential factor in relations between states. This is a matter for empirical investigation. Let's take the history of Europe in the 20th century. The major wars have not been intercultural wars. We've slaughtered each other to the tune of 70-80 million, but not over culture. Say what you will about the Ottoman Empire, but if you look calmly at the history of military, diplomatic, and commercial relations between the Ottoman Empire and Europe for 400 years, up until the end of the Ottoman Empire in 1918, you'll see that the modern empire formed alliances with different European states: with Germany one minute; with Britain another; with Russia another. In other words, culture and religion were not major factors in its foreign policy. So we're not looking at a fault line. We're not looking at something that is historically determined.

Let me be banal. There are 55 Islamic countries—55 members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the main loose commonwealth of Islamic states set up in 1969. Does culture play a role in their foreign policy? Well, to some degree, yes, but in two very specific regards. First of all, as a form of solidarity, either at the popular level or at the state level: support for the struggling Muslims in Palestine, Kashmir, Bosnia, or Chechnya. Some Muslim states do this some of the time. And at the popular level, there is a sentiment of transnational, pan-Islamic solidarity. It's quite a strong one now, more so than ten or twenty years ago. But it's not the determinant factor.

Look at Iran. Iran's constitution enjoins it to give support to struggling Muslims around the world. And it does support the Palestinians. But in Chechnya it supports the Russians. In Nagorno-Karabakh it supports the Armenians, even though the Azeris are Shiites. In Kashmir it supports the Indians. In Sinjiang, it supports China. So Iran does not allow purely cultural or religious solidarity to determine its foreign policy. The same goes for the other states, for whom trade and military advantage, and inter-ethnic rivalry with each other, are just as important.

Then we come to the second way in which culture matters: as a form of legitimation. So the Saudis say they are the protectors of the holy places. The Iranians say they represent the vanguard of Islam, which is

why they make such a hullabaloo about Palestine: it's an issue on which they can make themselves look good, like they tried to do on Salman Rushdie. But that doesn't mean that it determines their foreign relations. If we ask why Iran appears to be moving towards the acquisition of at least the capacity to have nuclear weapons, it's nothing to do with Islam. It's to do with interstate policy: the fact that Pakistan has nuclear weapons, that Israel has nuclear weapons, that Iran's been invaded several times in the last century. So once you get specific and stop engaging in Huntington's kind of grand narrative generalizing, things come into sharper focus.

Huntington's thesis, it should be noted, is very popular with Islamists, as it is with Hindu nationalists and radical Shintoists in Japan.

Danny Postel: Just as Edward Said's *Covering Islam* was popular with clerical hardliners in Iran. But should a thinker be held responsible for all of the uses made of his ideas?

Fred Halliday: I don't think so. But I do think Huntington has allowed himself to be used in an extremely irresponsible way. He has thrown fat into a fire that was to some extent already there, and just allowed it to burn. Since September 11th he has turned around in interviews and elsewhere, without any self-criticism or sense of social or international responsibility.

But I think the real concern that underlay that book is not in an analysis of the Middle East, about which he knows nothing, by the way. It's not even in an analysis of international relations. It's a concern about the decline of white hegemony within the United States. That's now been made explicit in his new book, but it was already clear in *The Clash of Civilizations*.

He's basically saying those guys out there are overtaking us. The Taiwanese mathematics levels at age nine are three times ours. The Chinese are advancing. There are all these other cultures out there. We've got to get our act together in the U.S. That's the punch behind *The Clash of Civilizations*.

Danny Postel: So you see the two books as companion volumes, in a sense?

Fred Halliday: Yes, the two go together. The new book [*Who Are We?*]

fulfills the first one. I felt that that was the agenda from the beginning: it was a concern about multiculturalism in the U.S. But he doesn't do the work. In *The Clash of Civilizations* there are a few pages about the Middle East, which are just third-rate Orientalism in the bad sense. He's taken a few bits out of context from Bernard Lewis at his worst, and turned this into the axiom of the book. In his new book, he's talking about Latinos in America. There are something like 455 magazines and newspapers in Spanish produced in the U.S. He doesn't read one of them. He doesn't read Spanish. He relies on a few stereotypes. He simply hasn't done the work. It's a form of American narcissism. The people are out there. You've got to go and study them. You've got to do the work.

A colleague of mine put it very well the other day. He's a young British guy who studies China. He said, "What's all this stuff about clash of civilizations? It's very simple. You go to the library. You read the books. You read the history. You learn the language. You go and live in those countries. And on the basis of that, you understand them." That's what we should be doing, and getting away from all this meta-stuff. It doesn't get us anywhere.

Danny Postel: In *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation* and elsewhere you've argued that the whole debate in Middle East studies, the Orientalism/anti-Orientalism paradigm that has held for the last 20-25 years—that is to say, in essence, the debate between Bernard Lewis and Edward Said—is moribund.

Fred Halliday: Well, in one sentence, I think the Said-Lewis debate is a diversion from the job of analyzing and engaging in critical solidarity with the peoples of the 22 countries of the Middle East. It's a debate about method. It's a debate about what other people in the West have written. It's a debate about perceptions.

I knew Said, who was a friend until the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and then he stopped talking to me. Lewis was a teacher of mine. I greatly respected him. I think his good works are very good indeed, as Said's literary work is very well worth reading. But their debate is counterproductive. They don't offer, for instance, alternative explanations of the rise of Arab nationalism, or of the administrative system of the Abbasid Empire, or the

role of law in Shiite conceptions of politics, or the role of ethnicity in the modern Middle East. They don't put side by side rival, substantive analyses of the issues that students of the Middle East should be engaged in. For a long time, neither of them actually wrote about what was happening in Middle Eastern societies. They wrote about meta-issues — which are not trivial, but some of these meta-issues should be discussed in a philosophy department. I mean, they're important issues and they should be discussed by people who are professionally competent in them. But they're not to do with Middle East studies. They're *relevant* to Middle East studies, but they're not what we should be doing. My view is that they've polarized the debate and made it about diversionary questions — not trivial questions, but diversionary questions. They've also introduced an element of bitterness—personal and also ethnic bitterness—into Middle East studies in the U.S., which has been very damaging. And the net result is that Middle East studies has spent 25 years looking in the wrong place, instead of getting on with the job of analyzing these societies. Middle Eastern studies is not a U.S. monopoly. Who do you guys think you are? There are lots of scholars in Europe who don't fall into these traps, neither the Orientalist nor anti-Orientalist straightjackets.

I must say I'm struck by the culture of anathematization I find in American academic life. There is a culture of the witch hunt, whereby people are said to have defected or gone to the right. It affects the discussion of many issues. There's almost a joy in saying X has 'defected,' Y has 'capitulated,' Z has 'sold out.' Aren't people allowed to change their minds? The world changes. People do too. The Left does not have a monopoly on truth or analysis or morality.

Danny Postel: You've argued that the work of the late Maxime Rodinson offers an alternative to the Said-Lewis framework. But his work had relatively little impact in the English-speaking world. How might the landscape of Middle East studies have been different had Rodinson become a point of reference in this debate the way Said did?

Fred Halliday: Maxime Rodinson was a French Marxist Orientalist of working-class, Jewish origin. Among other things, he studied ancient Semitic languages, and for many years, taught ancient Semitic languages

and archeology in Paris. He wrote a number of major books. One was a biography of the prophet Mohammed, a very astute interpretation. It was used throughout the Arab world as a textbook for many years, until 1999, when in Cairo, the Islamists objected to it being used as a textbook. The President of Egypt himself intervened to call on the university to ban it, on the grounds that it was insulting to Islam, because it talked about trade routes, and it talked about the influence of Christianity and Judaism on Islam, because it applies psychoanalysis to the Prophet, and so forth. The second major book he wrote was called *Islam and Capitalism*, which is an engagement with Max Weber's argument that there was something wrong with Islam which had prevented it from being capitalist and believing in economic development and profit. Rodinson showed that this was absolutely incorrect in terms of the ways in which Muslim economies had developed in the Arab world, in Iran, in South Asia, over centuries, but also that doctrinally there was absolutely no objection, including no objection to the taking of interest.

Rodinson's importance lies in his refusal to accept the polarization of the Said-Lewis debate. He remained a Marxist, but a guilty one, because, as he once said to me, "I joined the Communist Party in the most disgraceful year, 1937, at the height of the Stalin purges. And I left in the most disgraceful year, 1957, a year after the invasion of Hungary." But this guilty conscience also served him well. Then we come to his interventions on the Arab-Israeli question, which, for me, were paradigmatic. I came into Middle East politics through Iran in the mid-'60s, but after 1967 you couldn't ignore the Palestine question. And very importantly for British people of my generation, the clarification of our views on the Palestine question coincided with and went along with clarification of our views on the Northern Ireland question.

But again, you were faced with a political minefield in which each group accused the other of being fascists and murderers, and denied the other's rights. But by about 1970, we had all come to the view that, in both cases, there were two communities, lots about them you could criticize, lots of historical questions to be asked — but in the here and now, they were both communities with equal national rights. In the case of Palestine, this meant two independent states. And in the case of Ireland, it meant equal political rights within Northern Ireland up to when the majority chose to

change the status of Northern Ireland. You got away from the stuff about which one was there first, or who was massacred most, or what their holy books say, or who were collaborators with imperialism—all such questions were secondary. The key question is, you have two communities which meet minimal criteria of self-determining peoples. And on that basis, you accord them equal rights. And secondly, you critique the chauvinism and the fake justifications and the violations of the rules of war of both sides.

Which is why I say that on neither Ireland nor Palestine-Israel has anyone said anything interesting for the last 35 years, because they're stuck in their bedrock positions. You have to remember that before 1967, certainly in Europe, virtually everyone on the Left was pro-Israel. Then there was a kind of flip after 1967: with the Cold War and so forth, more people became pro-Palestinian, and many denied Israel's right to exist. In the last eight to ten years, we've gone backwards. I'm hearing arguments from both the Israeli and Arab sides which I thought we'd got over. The level and tone of polemic in the U.S. and in Europe on the Palestine question has degenerated enormously since the collapse of Camp David and the rise of the second Intifada. I find that much of the stuff put out in the name of Palestine is so irresponsible and sometimes racist. I also find the degree of anger and the one-sidedness of Israelis, and from pro-Israel people in the West, very disturbing.

Danny Postel: You've argued that the paradigms of the Cold War have remained with us despite the Cold War being over, and that it's high time to "bin the past," as you put it.

Fred Halliday: I spent a lot of time in the '70s and '80s analyzing the Cold War, the arms race, their impact on the Third World, Third World conflicts and so forth. And then '89-'91 happened, and I spent time in the 1990s analyzing both the collapse of Communism and why it happened, and trying to show how my particular theory of international relations and social change could explain it better than its academic and political rivals. Including my rivals on the Left, who argued it was because of the peace movement, which was a nice explanation. I wanted to emphasize the historic importance of the end of the Cold War. I tried to explain the collapse of Communism. I tried to explain why I thought this was a historic watershed,

as important as the end of the First or the Second World War.

But I missed something: that the legacy of the Cold War lives on. I only came to realize this really ten years afterwards.

Danny Postel: How so?

Fred Halliday: For example, the way in which Rumsfeld and his friends exaggerated the Iraqi threat — that was just a replay of threat exaggeration in the Cold War, including saying we were tied. It was a rerun of the threat inflation of the '70s and '80s.

Danny Postel: Eliot Weinberger describes Rumsfeld and Cheney as a Ford Administration sleeper cell.

Fred Halliday: I like that. But also on the other side, within the anti-globalization movement, a whole set of assumptions about the critique of capitalism. Fine, you're against capitalism, but in the name of what — given that the socialist experiment of the revolutionary kind failed and failed badly? It failed necessarily and not contingently. There's a naïve, unreconstructed quality to the radicalism of the anti-globalization movement. There's a continued worshipping of Cuba, of Che Guevara, and now of Hugo Chavez. People are completely stuck in the past. There's a lack of critical and informed interest among the anti-globalizers in the history of socialism, in the flawed history of internationalism.

So I realized that the Cold War continues to dominate our thinking. There are what I call three dustbins which still exercise their hold on us. We cannot understand the contemporary world if we don't see the degree to which the legacy of the past — above all, the Cold War — still affects thinking about politics in the contemporary world.

The three dustbins include, very crudely, the legacy of communism, which includes dreadful inter-ethnic conflicts, some of which are frozen but some of which are certainly not, and which are going to continue in Central Asia. They're hopefully frozen in the Balkans, though we don't yet know, and not frozen in the Horn of Africa for long. Another consequence of Communism's collapse is in the uncontrolled spread of nuclear materials around the former Soviet Empire. The creation not of democratic or liberal states, but of highly corrupt and manipulative states

in many cases, including Russia itself: we don't know where Russia is going. There's a very deep and dangerous resentment at the popular level about the West, about America, about Europe, which could, in the long run, transfer into quite dangerous foreign policies. So Communism left a dustbin, even as it collapsed as a state system.

The U.S. dustbin—the Western dustbin—is a faith in the efficacy of the market, which was the great ideological battering ram against Communism. One would have thought, looking at what's happened in, say, most of Latin America or in many other countries, that there would be serious questions about the Washington consensus.

There is the continued legacy after the end of the Cold War of the groups of murderers and brigands who the U.S. set up to fight Communism, particularly in the period of the Reagan doctrine. In Southern Africa—in Angola and Mozambique—these people still have enormous social and political influence. In the case of Afghanistan or the Middle East, the use of right-wing Islamism against Communism in the '70s and '80s has sown a terrible harvest. And let's start not with Al Qaeda but with what happened in Saudi Arabia. Faced with the Arab socialist revolutions in Egypt and Yemen in the '50s and '60s, the Saudis promoted Islamic education: universities which taught only Islamic law, Islamic thinking. And they trained people who are completely incapable of having a job in a modern society, and who have a paranoid and completely uneducated world view. They are a recruiting ground for bin Laden and his people. Bin Laden is the illegitimate child of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan.

So then the third dustbin is the dustbin of the anti-globalization movement.

Danny Postel: Do you still call yourself a socialist?

Fred Halliday: I don't, because I think it's too easily misunderstood. I associate myself with much of the radical critique of capitalism. But much of what socialism tried to be—planning society, promoting equality—I agree with. But I can't associate with either the authoritarian or the ineffective trends which have defined socialism in recent decades. The anti-globalization movement has taken over a critique of capitalism without, to a minimal degree, reflecting on what actually happened in

the 20th century. You can't denounce capitalism in the name of a radical alternative without thinking about what happened when we tried a radical alternative. You can't denounce rights as an imperialist creation without asking, well, what would a world without the concept of rights be like? You can't support every ethnic and nationalist group around the world who shows up at Porto Alegre and then say this is all part of some emancipated caravan, given that they may hate each other, they may want to oppress women, they may be against modern medicine and so forth.

I fell into the trap as much as anybody else. In 1991 Communism collapses and you say: right, this is a new world. Things have changed. But what happened to the Left? They woke up like Rip Van Winkle around 1999 and started repeating the same things that were said 20 or 50 or 100 years ago. They haven't learned from their past. Two themes that are particularly important in my work are the use of violence and internationalism. Internationalism is a wonderful idea. I would die for internationalism. But Stalin defined internationalism as unquestioning loyalty to the USSR. Mao and Castro used internationalism as a manipulative instrument of state. I read the stuff coming out of Porto Alegre and my hair falls out. I see people saying, for the first time I'm in a global movement committed to social equality and radical change. Well, sorry, there was socialism. There was Communism. And they made a mess of it, and you better study it before jumping up and saying that you've suddenly discovered the solution to everything.

Danny Postel: What alternatives might there be, Fred? If the Marxist-Leninist revolutionary model is dead, and actually existing Third Worldism, i.e. the anti-globalization movement, is deeply flawed, as you suggest, what's left? Is social democratic tinkering the only available path left? What other models are there for the Third World today?

Fred Halliday: We cannot look at the world as a place that can just be managed. I hate it when people say: but we've now got past the age of ideologies and utopias. Thank God now, we're not. People aspire to a different world. People want a different world for themselves and for their families. That's why they migrate in awful conditions. That's why they'll work in shitty jobs in New York and London to send their money home. That's why they join and support Al Qaeda. We have to recognize that.

We live in a profoundly and increasingly unjust world. On the other hand, we have to have policies that are realistic. That doesn't mean complacent. I very much like the distinction made by British social scientist Gary Runciman between what is implausible and what is improbable. He said we should go for changes that are implausible but not for those that are improbable. For example, abolishing cervical cancer for every woman in the world is possible, even if it's implausible. We have the technology. It won't require much money. It requires political will. Providing universal primary education is implausible, but is possible. Abolishing all major indices of difference between men and women in public life in our societies is possible. But it is not possible to have an equal world. It is not possible to abolish the state.

So there are plenty of goals which don't conform to seizing the barricades, grabbing the radio station and executing the President of the *ancien regime* but which are radical or revolutionary and would make a significant difference. And then I come back to a question which I still regard as open, and which I think Marx regarded as open, which is: what is the full potential of capitalism properly directed? Is Jeffrey Sachs right? I'm not sure if he is or not. Can we, through the U.N.D.P. Millennium Goals and through a huge change of priorities and effort, but within the resources we have, actually lessen and gradually reduce the division between rich and poor countries in the world? I don't think it's impossible. I think it's improbable, but it's not impossible. The fact is each year, the gap is getting wider. And yet compared to what you've got in Russia, or what you've got in Africa, or what you've got in Latin America, this is a relatively desirable model, if a very boring one.

Danny Postel: You wrote a book on Arab migrants to the UK. What's your take on the riots engulfing the suburbs of Paris?

Fred Halliday: One response is to be comparative and to say that in every major developed country, there are divisions which combine ethnic and social factors, and also generational factors, and are spatially configured within major cities, which lead not only to exclusion and resentment and lack of employment but lack of employability, because if you don't have the skills and the work discipline, and are generally marginalized and isolated, things will periodically explode. It's true in Britain. It's

true in Germany. And now in France. It's part of this broader problem of the changing nature of industrial society. If there were ten million new jobs in the car industry or in traditional smokestack industries in these countries every year, or in the coal mines, the problem wouldn't arise to the same degree.

On the other hand, one lesson which I learned from my work on the Yemenis, who were, other than the Chinese, the first Third World and the first Muslim group to migrate to Britain, going back a hundred years, is that it's very hard to understand these communities if you don't know and haven't lived in the country from which they come. If you don't know the language, if you don't know the social customs, there are many things you get wrong, including the thinking that forms people's behavior. Many behaviors are taken to be traditional but in fact may be something new. This is true, for example, of the eating practices and some religious practices of the Yemenis in England but not in their home country. There are many instances of syncretism. In the case of France, you have this whole identity known as *Beur*, which is not French, but it's not Algerian either—the language is a mixture of the two, as is the music.

Danny Postel: A kind of neo-traditionalism, if you will.

Fred Halliday: Neo-traditionalism or neo-authentic. Insofar as there is a political element in this—insofar as the political campaigns espoused by these groups reflect political campaigns inspired or even directed from home: in the case of British people of Pakistani origin, there's no doubt the campaign against Rushdie and the campaigns of Kashmir, and now the campaigns against the Iraq War, have roots back home because these political parties from Pakistan organize in Britain, as they have a perfect right to do. But in the case of France, I don't think that's the case. Many of them are children of what were known as the Harkis, who were actually Algerians who fought for the French. So they're not being manipulated by the Algerian government or by groups back home.

I certainly think the riots express a long-term social problem within developed countries, but that will feed into the broader problem of relations between Europe and the Muslim world. Europe can't insulate itself. After all, the French political system was convulsed by the Algerian war of independence of 1954-1962. And the British faced a huge defeat

over the Suez war of '56. The Spanish monarchy fell in 1931 in part because of failures in the war in Morocco. The Soviet Union didn't collapse because of Afghanistan, but it certainly played a role. And Turkey has been part of the European diplomatic and strategic scene for three or four hundred years.

So we are inexorably and historically linked to that part of the world, let alone through issues of migration, environment, energy and so forth. And we have to deal with it. But here we come back to my core professional and personal point, that you have to train people who know about these countries. Not the simplifications of Huntington or of bin Laden—you need people who know about the history, people who know the languages, people who are engaged seriously in discussion of substantive issues, be it trade, security, education. And there is no substitute for this intellectual, professional, academic task.

That, to me, is the vocation of an internationalist intellectual: beyond supporting human rights in these countries, actually to try and promote informed discussion, which may feed into public debate and into education and so forth.

And meanwhile, the chauvinists and the simplifiers have their way, compounded by those on the Left whose view of internationalism and solidarity is simply to denounce their own governments, not knowing anything about what's happening in places like Cuba or Cambodia or China.

I very much like the famous mistranslations of the 20th century. I particularly like the first Chinese translation of the *Communist Manifesto*, which was done by Chinese students in Japan from Japanese in about 1910. And instead of saying “Workers of the world, unite—you’ve nothing to lose but your chains,” it said, “Scholars of the world, unite—you have nothing to lose but your shame”!

The shame is not doing the work. The shame is not listening to other people. The shame is not saying what you think. The shame is running after fashions of Left or Right. The shame is wasting your time in a kind of public, theatrical pugilism of the kind which too many of my British friends in the United States seem to have fallen into.