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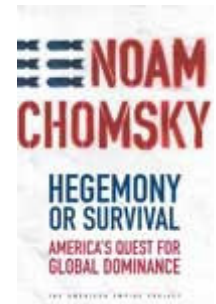
Hegemony or Survival

by Noam Chomsky

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From [Kate Mann](#), for About.com

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Noam Chomsky's latest book, "Hegemony or Survival," presents a view of American foreign policy, which lies in stark contrast to that depicted by corporate media, popular pundits, and US heads of state. With the fall of the Soviet Union, the US has emerged as the preeminent superpower of the world and Chomsky dissects with meticulous research how the United States has chosen to leverage that position to pursue an "imperial grand strategy", which will ensure itself "unilateral world domination through absolute military superiority".

What sets Chomsky's work apart from so many others who write social and political theory today is that he is equally critical of the Democratic party as he is of the Republican party. Chomsky's theory portrays America's foreign policy as being consistent across partisan lines. Democrats and Republicans for that matter appear more as two wings of a capitalist, imperialist party than the two vastly different political ideologies that are presented in the popular media.

The real meat of Chomsky's work lies in the analysis produced from a re-examination of history. By examining key moments in America's history, Chomsky is able to elicit a more consistent and plausible set of motives for US foreign policy actions rather than the hyperbolic calls for democracy and totalitarian regime change that we have become so accustomed to hearing.

Questions immediately begin to rise to the surface while Chomsky exhumes the historical record and aligns it back into context. Was the United States really concerned with democracy when it supported a viscous proxy war in Nicaragua, even though their government had been democratically elected? Is the United States government hypocritical when it condemns state sponsored terrorism when it sponsored terrorism itself against such countries as Cuba and Nicaragua. And, how does the United States rationalize the School of the Americas, which has long been understood as a training ground for Latin American neo-fascist terrorists? Is the United States truly interested in peace in the Middle East when it denies the "Saudi Plan" set forth in early 2002, which would offer "full recognition and integration [of Israel] into the region in exchange for withdrawal to the 1967 borders?" Why did we go to war with Iraq when no imminent threat of WMD's could be found, no connection to Al Qaida could be proven, and multiple studies were produced by leading agencies suggesting that invading Iraq would only decrease domestic security?

The answers for Chomsky are surprisingly consistent with what he feels are a foreign policy guided by imperial global expansion and military dominance. Countries must be aligned with US interest in order to ensure capital penetration and corporate and military hegemony. If a country does not choose to align, then it will wind up a target of US backed aggression, or branded a terrorist state. In 1965, Indonesia expressed its intention to elder statesman Ellsworth Bunker that they wished to "'stand on their own two feet in developing their economy, free from foreign, especially Western influence'.

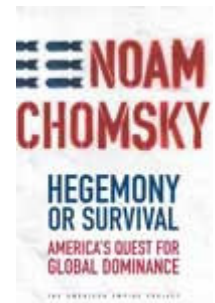
A National Intelligence Estimate in September 1965 warned that if the efforts of the mass-based PKI 'to energize and unite the Indonesian nation ... succeeded, Indonesia would provide a powerful example for the underdeveloped world and hence a credit to communism and a setback for Western prestige.' A US backed coup ensued, killing close to 1,000,000 people, and installed the brutal dictator General Suharto. This is the cost, Chomsky highlights, of not aligning with the "master" state.

If a country does choose to align, as is the case with countries like Israel and Turkey, they become client states and are protected under the aegis of the American military, and given monetary and military aid. Although Turkey is run by an iron fisted dictator with an abysmal human rights record, the US government makes concessions for Turkey's actions, as it is a client state and performs a strategic role in the interest of the American government. This notion of the client state is why popular solutions to the Middle East crisis like the "Saudi Plan" are not accepted. Israel's role as Middle East policeman is too strategically important to deny Israel it's own expansionist desires.

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Chomsky concludes by discerning "two trajectories in current history: one aiming toward hegemony, acting rationally within a lunatic doctrinal framework as it threatens survival; the other dedicated to the belief that 'another world is possible', in the words that animate the World Social Forum, challenging the reigning ideological system and seeking to create constructive alternatives of thought action and institutions." Chomsky does not foresee which trajectory will dominate, but feels strongly that because we live in a critical moment in US history, the course we choose is crucial as it is the survival of our own race that is at stake.

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