

Chomsky Is No Friend of the Syrian Revolution

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A leading Syrian intellectual takes on the famous linguist, arguing that Americentrism blinds the latter from the reality of the revolution

Just three weeks following my release after 16 years in prison in Syria, I started translating a book into Arabic. The book was “Powers and Prospects: Reflections on Human Nature and the Social Order,” by Noam Chomsky. It had taken me some time to realize that the leading linguist and the harsh critic of American imperialism was the same person. I saw this as a remarkable and much-needed example of the social and political responsibility of scientists and intellectuals. His active participation in the civil rights movement and mobilization against the Vietnam War were impressive, along with his prolific written works about both linguistics and politics. In the book I translated, there were two essays on linguistics, one about the intellectual’s responsibility and five on politics.

For former communist political prisoners who had spent long years in detention and had experienced the fall of communism while still in prison, this American bellwether was important. He told us that the struggle for justice and freedom was still possible, that we had partners in the world and we were not alone, and that the fall of the Soviet bloc could be emancipatory rather than a backbreaking loss.

The second book I co-translated with another former political prisoner was Robert Barsky’s “A Life of Dissent.” It was about Chomsky’s life and politics. Even at that early stage, we had some criticisms of Chomsky’s rigid system of thought, limited by U.S. centrism, which is only partly helpful in analyzing many struggles, ours included. We were ourselves dissidents in our country and on two levels: opposing a regime that was showing blatant discriminatory and oppressive tendencies, and expressing critical views about the Soviet Union and its communism. One main principle of the party I was a young member of was “istiklaliyya” (independence or autonomy), which meant that it was we, and we alone, who decided the right policies for our country and our people, not any center abroad. So, we were not orphans looking for a new father, nor were we driven by a want to replace Marxism-Leninism by a Chomskian catechism of sorts. However, we always thought that our cause was one: fighting inequality and oppression everywhere, and on an equal and brotherly basis.

But time revealed this to be an illusion, for which we alone must bear responsibility. In the 11 years since the start of the Syrian revolution in March 2011, Chomsky has not written once about Syria to inform his many readers about the country’s plight. His scattered comments reveal that he views the Syrian struggle — as with every other struggle — solely through the frame of American imperialism. He is thus blind to the specificities of Syria’s politics, society, economy and history.

What’s more, his perception of America’s role has developed from a provincial Americentrism to a sort of theology, where the U.S. occupies the place of God, albeit a malign one, the only mover and shaker. Understandably, such a perspective raises questions about the autonomy of other actors,

with echoes of the debates about free will by Islamic theologians some 1,200 years ago. Chomsky seems closer to the jabriyyeen, who fully deny human freedom and ascertain the omnipotence of God, than to the qadariyyeen, who thought that God's justice and human freedom went together.

Jihadists today subscribe mainly to the tradition of jabriyyah. Chomsky has been persistent in his own jihad for decades, in a way that reminds one of Ibn Hanbal or Ibn Timiyyah, though without risking freedom or life as the two fathers of modern Salafism did (except for his brief detention following a protest at the Pentagon during the Vietnam War).

The U.S. has never been a force for democracy, rule of law and human rights in the Middle East. Its destructive role in the region, since 1967 at least, is justifiably compared to the role of state tyranny and possibly Islamic nihilism after the American occupation of Iraq. However, the U.S. has not been central to the Syrian catastrophe, as a statement that Chomsky himself signed in March 2021 acknowledges. If anything, the U.S. has done its best not to harm the Assad regime, even after it violated international law forbidding the use of chemical weapons and crossed then President Barack Obama's "red line" in 2013, as well as many times before and after.

Chomsky's Americentric perspective tends systematically to minimize the crimes of states that are opposed to the U.S. In a recent interview published in DAWN in January 2022, he said: "You can hardly accuse Iran of illegal or criminal behavior by supporting the [United Nations'] recognized government" of Syria. Supporting a regime that Chomsky himself happens to describe as "monstrous" is not criminal or illegal, he insists. He finds nothing illegal about supporting a regime that denies its subjects any rights, and he thinks it would be illegal to punish that same regime for killing over 1,400 of its citizens with chemical weapons in a clear breach of international law. He said this to Independent Global News in September 2013.

What Chomsky calls Syria's "recognized government" is the dynastic regime that has been in power for 52 years, precisely half of the 104 years that are the entire history of the modern Syrian state. During these five decades, Syria has suffered from internal strife twice. There were tens of thousands of victims in the first wave (1979-82) and hundreds of thousands in the second (2011-present). Both are structurally related to the cliquish and discriminatory formation of the regime.

Commentators like Chomsky make a point of calling the regime "brutal" and "monstrous" but merely as a preface to what they consider the real problem: the role of the U.S. and its allies in the region. They are mistaken.

The monstrous character of the regime is the central fact of this conflict, indeed of Syria's history since 1970. It is the key to understanding the country's continuing catastrophe and the root of everything else. But Chomsky's approach has the effect of relativizing the regime's crimes, which account for 90% of the victims and destruction. It seems that if the U.S. cannot be blamed for these crimes, then they are not very important.

It is also quite curious that Chomsky mentions in a rather bland, offhand way that when Iran extends its influence in the region, it does so mainly in the "Shia or near-Shia areas," as if this is somehow a neutral fact without destructive social and political implications. We leftists and nationalists in the region call this sectarianism, and it has been a singularly important source of civil strife and genocidal massacres in many countries. Chomsky appears not to have engaged at all with the work of many Arab intellectuals, mostly leftists, on sectarianism and its destructive effects since the 1970s. So maybe one should pose a Spivakian question to him: Can subaltern intellectuals speak? Based on my recent personal experience, the answer is no. My letter to the Progressive International about Syria failed to appear, and the people there stopped contacting me after I sent the letter to them, though it was their initiative to talk to me in April 2020 and to invite me to curate a whole

dossier about Syria for them (that “letter to the Progressive International” was later published on Aljumhuriya.net). Apparently, there is no place for us, Syrian leftists and democrats who oppose the Assad regime, in an international progressive coalition.

Since the days when the “Eastern Question” was posed more than a century and a half ago, sectarianism has developed through the nexus of external colonial interventions and internal “exterrventions,” so to speak, when domestic sociocultural groups are pushed to demand protection from external powers. French imperialism offered a paramount example of this paradigm up to the independence of Syria and Lebanon after World War II, and that history remains relevant.

By supervising imported Shiite militias from Afghanistan, Iraq and Lebanon, and coordinating with highly sectarianized military formations such as the Fourth Division of the Syrian military (led by Maher al-Assad, Bashar’s brother) and other equally sectarianized security agencies, Iran isn’t merely an “alleged threat,” as Chomsky said in the same interview; rather, it is another colonial power, a ruthless one, manipulating in a criminal way the social divisions that the Assad regime has been exacerbating for half a century. Iran is responsible for war crimes against Syrians opposing the regime.

Within Chomsky’s theology, none of this is visible. The transformation of the oldest Arab republic into a privatized state with growing genocidal potential derived from a fantasy of permanent and absolute security that has always led to mass atrocities in Syria and everywhere else, as Dirk Moses argues in “The Problems of Genocide: Permanent Security and the Language of Transgression.” This reactionary transformation, the biggest in Syria’s history after independence, has never merited notice within Chomsky’s perspective.

It is not surprising that Syrians are not represented in his comments on Syria. Chomsky never refers to a Syrian, or quotes one, or even mentions a Westerner who supports the Syrian cause. His sources are the likes of Patrick Cockburn, who considers the regime a lesser evil, and possibly the late Robert Fisk, the British journalist who gave voice to sectarian killers like Jamil Hassan, the head of the notorious air force intelligence, and Suheil Hassan, the leader of the equally notorious Tiger Forces, but never to people critical of the chemical regime. All three share a “high politics” perspective centered on “recognized governments” — Russia, Iran, Israel and Saudi Arabia — as well as jihadists and American imperialism.

From Cockburn, Chomsky borrows the notion of “Wahhabization of Sunni Islam,” which is a rash and irresponsible generalization, and that is why it is so useful for those who do not know and want others to think that they know. This generalization is by no means different from Raphael Patai’s notoriously racist book, “The Arab Mind,” which provided the theoretical foundation for torture in Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib, according to Judith Butler in “Frames of War.” Cockburn did not tell Chomsky anything about the Iranization of Shiite Islam, which is also a big generalization, though a bit more plausible considering that the Shiites are a minority group in most Muslim countries and because there is an active imperial center in Tehran.

It is quite telling, by the way, that DAWN omitted Chomsky’s exonerations of Iran and its “doing it mainly in the Shia or near-Shia areas,” from the Arabic version of their interview with him. They know better, and they seem to have felt embarrassed by what he said.

If the “Wahhabization of Sunni Arabs” is the correct diagnosis of a fundamentalist illness manifested by the Islamic State group and al Qaeda, then perhaps the right remedy would be the sort of de-Wahhabization we have seen in the bestial Syrian military prison Sednaya, Guantánamo or Abu Ghraib, where “enhanced interrogation techniques” can be tried and developed. The likes of Cockburn and Chomsky have been instrumental in desensitizing Western public opinion to whatever

may happen to the “Wahhabized herd,” something that both enhances the precariousness of their lives and legitimizes the very wars that Chomsky opposes.

But why is Cockburn, who does not even speak Arabic, “the most serious commentator” on Syria and the region, according to the co-author of “Manufacturing Consent”? Are there not people in the region who are capable of commenting seriously on their own affairs and representing themselves? Is it conceivable today for even mainstream authors in the U.S. to call a foreign journalist “the most serious commentator” on another foreign country or region? In this unexpectedly colonial practice, Chomsky could benefit from a big dose of Edward Said.

By the way, there are quite a few books in Arabic about contemporary Islamism, Syria and groups like the Islamic State, each more informative and nuanced than Cockburn’s “The Rise of Islamic State: ISIS and the New Sunni Revolution,” whose sectarianizing “analysis” and stereotypically colonial knowledge is uncritically regurgitated by “the most quoted living public intellectual in the world.” Fisk was even more mechanical in deploying this colonial method of analysis. These three men repeat stale colonial stuff, rehabilitated by internal colonial regimes like Assad’s and by cruel expansionist powers like Iran and Russia for their own benefit.

What both Chomsky and his “most serious commentator” are ignorant of is that Islamism in all its variations is a minoritarian and elitist phenomenon, and that is one reason it is so violent. The Arab Barometer polls in 2018-19 showed that “fewer than 20% of the people in Tunisia and Egypt (as well as Algeria, Jordan, Iraq and Libya) trusted Islamist parties. Over 76% would favor democracy and civil state.” These figures are quoted in Asef Bayat’s “Revolutionary Life: The Everyday of the Arab Spring.” In this book, published in 2021, we find a genuinely democratic approach, subaltern perspective, nuanced analyses, respect of facts, principled anti-racism — unlike Chomsky’s theology and his source. Syria is by no means different from the societies in the poll.

In the following paragraphs I will try to show readers how superficial the thesis of Wahhabization is, though without going into much detail.

Contemporary Islamism is the attempt to manufacture politics in societies that have no real internal politics, in states that also lack real sovereignty at the international level. It shows the limits of political poverty in societies that have suffered politicicide, like Syria, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. For the only “assembly” that even exterminatory regimes cannot disband is that of believers in places of worship, and the only “opinion” they cannot silence is that of the holy scriptures. This circumstance is why Islamists came to play a relatively big role over the last four decades. Islam enabled many people to gather and talk, and even to protest about public affairs.

However, the hierarchical and elitist structure of Islamism systematically also dispossesses people from politics the moment Islamism moves from protest to power. Even for jihadism, which constitutes an even smaller minority within the Islamist minority, it would be an oversimplification to reduce it to a process of Wahhabization triggered by the Saudi monarchy. Instead, jihadism is a war waged when modern Arab and Muslim states cannot fight foreign invaders (Americans, Israelis, etc.) and can wage war only against their subjects. Islam that was formed by the empire (rather than forming it) takes it upon itself to respond to this long-term condition of deficient sovereignty of states. There is definitely an anti-colonial and anti-imperialist component in jihad, but it is lost by the mythologized imperialist imagination and memory of contemporary Islamism.

In Syria in particular, the reduction of a sociocultural majority to a political minority — with discrimination, politicicide, torture and massacres as methods for effecting minoritization — has considerable explanatory power for a better understanding of Sunni Islamism. Unrepresented people, denied rights and the ability to organize, tend to find representation in their religious

identities. The coincidence between aggressive state tyranny — which looks at the ruled with the Gorgonic eye of sovereignty (oneness, killing, exception) and to the regional and international powers with the benign eye of politics (plurality, negotiation, rules) — makes the rise of violent Islamism a historical certainty.

In our upside-down states, where war is inward and politics is outward (unlike classic Islam and the ideal type of modern nation-states), contemporary jihadism represents sovereignty without politics, outward wars as well as inward ones.

I elaborate a bit on this issue of fundamentalism because it seems to be an important point in Chomsky's theology and because of the pathetic level of knowledge about Islamism in the West. In contemporary analysis, Islamists, and especially jihadists, seem irrational, irresponsible and senseless. With this as a theory, the solution can be only referring them to Guantánamo, Abu Ghraib, Europe's Guantánamo (al-Hol detention camp in northeastern Syria, where thousands of women and children, hundreds of whom are of European origins, are indefinitely detained for being related to some Islamic State "illegal combatants") or Sednaya (and Tadmur in the years of my youth) with no rights whatsoever, and to be left there indefinitely. They have been rendered inhuman, and therefore their lives do not matter.

Does serious study of Islamism across its broad spectrum from practicing individuals to nihilist organizations like the Islamic State group and al-Qaeda justify and legitimate the latter? Not at all. But it can certainly help us understand a significant global phenomenon and avoid the reactionary battles that these Islamists, along with their powerful counterparts in the West, Russia, India and China, want us to flounder in for generations.

Chomsky's "ideas" on this are just another expression of the failure of Western humanities to humanize: He takes the dehumanization part for granted, reproduces a poor version of it and consolidates it. There is a global Islamic question (Islamism plus Islamophobia, which is in effect a mixture of Sunniphobia and Arabophobia), and the way Islam and Islamism are represented everywhere seems only to chart a course toward ever greater carnage. In this, the guru critiqued here is as conservative as anybody can be.

The situation in Syria with five occupation powers is instructive for anybody genuinely interested in bettering their understanding of the current global situation. We have U.S. forces in part of the country, Russians and Iranians protecting the "recognized government," Turks in yet another part, all four with their local or imported proxies; and before all that, we have the Israelis, who have occupied the Golan Heights since 1967 and have monopolized Syria's skies in coordination with the Russians.

Syria is a rare situation of "liquid imperialism," to paraphrase the late Zygmunt Baumann; yet the fact that there are five powerful states in one small country, or what can be called "imperialism in one country," does not seem to interest Chomsky. Let us not forget too that "the conquered imperialists," or imperialists without empire — by which I mean the Sunni jihadists hailing from across the globe — are still there. This complex situation cannot be explained by relativizing the crimes of America's opponents and absolutizing U.S. crimes.

Chomsky says that Russia's intervention in Syria is "wrong" but is "not imperialist," because "supporting a government is not imperialism." Russia has many military bases in Syria, has leased the Tartous Port for 49 years and has killed 23,000 Syrian civilians in six years. Putin and his aides have boasted several times of successfully testing over 320 weapons systems in Syria and that 85% of Russian army commanders gained combat experience in Syria. In 2018 and 2019, Russia received weapons orders worth \$51.1 billion and \$55 billion. Such actions do not figure at all in Chomsky's

analysis; in response to Syrian doctor Taha Bali's question about Russian imperialism, Chomsky denied that it was an imperialist practice before moving hurriedly to his eternal monologue: "What does the U.S. do? It supports the countries that are developing the jihadi movements," meaning the Saudi monarchy.

This view is quite superficial, as I hope has become clear by now. If anything, lack of sovereignty of the Saudi state and its need of foreign protectors, rather than its active support, is what explains jihadism. Osama bin Laden was quite clear on this point in 1990 when he asked that the Saudis not allow American and other troops to take bases in the kingdom and said that only Muslims should defend Muslim lands. However, U.S. support for the Saudis should not be considered imperialism either, for the Saudi government is also recognized by the U.N.

A sense of the embarrassing level of Chomsky's knowledge about Syria can be seen in the same video interview in which he claims that there was no uprising in Syria in 2012 (according to our subaltern knowledge, the uprising started in March 2011) and then implies that, if there were protesters, they were there alongside the Islamic State and other jihadist groups.

We get an equally interesting glimpse into Chomsky's mode of thought when, on the issue of humanitarian intervention after the chemical massacre of 2013, he asks the same Syrian doctor and activist: Who should the Americans bomb in Syria? The regime? Because that would of course undermine the "resistance front" to jihadists.

Chomsky's reduction of the Syrian struggle to this dominant frame is shared by Eric Zammour, the French right-wing racist candidate for the presidency, who recently recommended rehabilitating relations with the Syrian regime because the choice is either the status quo or the Islamic State and the caliphate. Another adherent is Sergey Lavrov, Russia's foreign minister, who declared in 2012 that Russia would not accept Sunni rule in Syria. Chomsky has many fixed ideas, and it seems easier to move mountains than to expect him to revise them or admit error.

Amid all this, Chomsky's criticism of the U.S. role in Syria seems entirely superfluous. Since the U.S. did exactly what he likes: It never bombed the regime, fought only the jihadists, thought, like him, that it is either Assad or jihadism, and supported the Kurds, whom he wished the evil American God would protect (see his contribution in "Dissidents of the International Left," edited by Andy Heintz, 2019, page 26). Why protect them, but not all the others? Syrians have asked for international protection since the fall of 2011, some six months after their fully peaceful uprising, to no avail. Only after mobilizing their own peaceful collective power and then demanding protection from the world they thought themselves a part of did many people begin to resort to Allah, which was good for the Allah-crat groups.

Interestingly, Chomsky speaks in Heintz's book like a military general, telling the American imperialist hegemon that it "should do whatever possible to protect the Kurds instead of keeping to past policies of regular betrayal." For once, humanitarian intervention is possible.

In truth, Syrians have been Palestinized while the regime is Israelized with Russia occupying the U.S. role: 16 times vetoing a U.N. Security Council resolution to protect the regime from blame. But Chomsky's thought appears to reside in theology rather than history. It is free of context or position and eternally valid, hence unchanging. This privileging of system over context and position accounts for Chomsky referencing Saddam Hussein's 1988 chemical massacre in Halabja in his DAWN interview while failing to mention anything about the many chemical massacres perpetrated by the regime in Syria, though they are far more recent.

By now it should be despairingly clear why: America was implicated in the first, hence its victims are

worthy of sympathy. America's role in the Syrian chemical massacre was more ambiguous: It condemned the attack but retreated from its own red line and went on to broker a sordid deal with Russia. The event did not lend itself to Chomsky's deterministic view, so he resolved his cognitive dissonance by turning to denial.

"It's not so obvious why the Assad regime would have carried out a chemical warfare attack at a moment when it's pretty much winning the war," he said. Well, it was not so obvious why the Nazis would have carried out gas chamber executions at a moment when they were pretty much winning the war in the East. For at least six months, Hannah Arendt doubted the very existence of gas chambers because they were not militarily necessary. It was not obvious either why the U.S. Army would humiliate, terrorize and torture Iraqi prisoners in Abu Ghraib after successfully toppling Saddam's regime. It is still not obvious why the Assad regime itself would keep torturing people in its dungeon for years, only to execute them in the end.

Replacing facts by primitive logic, Chomsky's comment about the August 2013 massacres is not an expression of knowledge, but of denial based on motivated reasoning. It was not impossible for him to read reports from Eastern Ghouta, based on field research and activism, by the likes of the great Razan Zeitouneh, translated into English, and published just after the big massacre of August 2013. But Chomsky has never allowed facts to complicate his neat schemas. In his analysis, Syrian activists and writers are invisible, nonexistent indeed.

Chomsky supported Ted Postol, the conspiracy theorist who denies the chemical massacre of Khan Sheikhoun, where 92 people were killed on April 4, 2017. This "professor at MIT" was described by comrade Noam as "a very serious and credible analyst," comparable certainly to "the most serious commentator." Are there people in Khan Sheikhoun to be contacted and asked about what has happened to their community and who they think was responsible for killing their loved ones? Not in the world of "MIT professors." In our world, the subaltern may have a voice, but it has no audience within elite American universities.

One is led to conclude that a crime is a crime when it is committed by American imperialism or against those who are not allied with it. By contrast a crime is not much of a crime when the perpetrators are not the Americans or the victims are from only the "Wahhabized" communities. There is nothing "criminal" or "illegal" in killing those from the latter category. Even supporting a monstrous regime cannot be criminal, because this same monster is a government.

The "government" in Syria heads a torture machine; it is extremely corrupt, extremely sectarian and extremely destructive of the truth. In a sane world this means that it is illegitimate. It is a junta under whose long rule Syria has gone from an underdeveloped country into a hopeless slaughterhouse. In the 52 years of Assad family rule, it has legitimized itself using the colonial trope of "protecting minorities." Another legitimating idea used by the regime after the revolution is the imperialist war on terror, the only "grand narrative" remaining on our planet, and the basis of criminal alliances against popular movements and on behalf of criminal juntas everywhere. It is therefore extraordinary that Chomsky, a self-proclaimed anarchist, justifies the Russian intervention in Syria because it was invited by its "recognized government."

The ossification of Chomsky's system of thought explains the paradox of labeling the regime brutal and monstrous without being able to say one positive sentence about any of those who have been struggling against it. Among other things, his system strangles his better judgment. He cannot be blind to the fact that the dynastic Assad regime is one of the worst on the planet. Chomsky is instead guided by a dead system that is unresponsive to people's legitimate desire not to live under violent tyranny or to the scale of human suffering and pain inflicted upon them when they act upon that desire.

He sticks to a reified system because it serves as a common language that Chomsky shares with his fans and followers. That is why he has greater trouble dissenting from this system than from the American imperialist system. In Islam, they call the former dissent the greater jihad. It is always easier to struggle against the professed enemies than against your imperial self and discourse.

A lifelong leftist myself, I have been struck in the Western leftist talk about Syria not by the unbrotherly, undemocratic and unsympathetic position of many involved in it but by the triviality of the debate, a stultifying combination of ignorance and arrogance. Syria has never been the focus of the debate; rather it has been just a tool for reiterating old dogmas about U.S. imperialism and its intrigues. This is the same solipsistic shell within which Cockburn and Fisk also flourish. Chomsky can't acknowledge Syrians because we destabilize this system, complicate the language and insist on our right to represent ourselves.

Some readers may find this critique harsh and emotional in its refutation of a supposed ally. It is. And it is precisely because he was supposed to be an ally. Chomsky is quite influential, and he is responsible for spreading misjudgment and apathy about the biggest struggle in this century. It is no longer correct conduct to absolve him of criticism as we, Syrian writers and activists, have done so far. The problem with Chomsky is not that he knows little about Syria (which indeed is the case); the problem is that he can never say, "I do not know." Within his perspective, he is as omniscient as U.S. imperialism is omnipotent. I regret to say that he seems to feel even less than the little he knows, as his unforgivable comment on the chemical massacre of 2013 shows. He can be a polemicist in a rather dishonorable way as a long exchange of emails between him and Sam Hamad in 2017 displays. What seemed at stake for him is his own correctness, not the fate of millions of people. Such insularity is an insult to any true left, liberatory politics, and it deserves to be left behind.

If anything, Chomsky has helped make Syrian activists and writers fighting for democracy and social justice invisible, rather than helping to make us and our cause more visible. Hardly the comportment of an ally.

It is easy to detect a strong imperialist component in Chomsky's top-down anti-imperialism, one that simply does not see ordinary people in their struggle for life and dignity; yet it does not shy away from informing us what genuine struggle is, what threats are real and what are alleged, and who is allowed to make sense of them. Annexing all struggles to one that Chomsky and his ilk decide upon is by no means different from annexing other lands to an imperialist center. The first calls for *istiklaliyya* (independence as mindset) and the other for *istiklal* (self-rule). The imperialist anti-imperialist always knows better without really bothering to know. Prosaic facts are not important.

Chomsky's influence overseas outweighs even American presidents in its symbolic power; yet unlike them, he is not bound by even notional "checks and balances." It is intimidating to criticize such an authority. It can be dangerously intimidating to criticize political authorities, as is still the case in my country, Russia, Iran and many parts of the world. But it is our duty as ethical agents in contemporary struggles for freedom and justice to question these authorities and show their limitations. I have tried to show that, in relation to the Syrian cause, this particular authority lacks basic information, nuanced analysis, intellectual curiosity and human empathy. It is fair to say that this is an unconstitutional authority, indeed an absolute and arbitrary one.

Twenty-five years after translating "Powers and Prospects," I find its author decisively closing off any prospects of a different future. Chomsky's perspective is contradictory to democracy in many fundamental ways: high politics, Americentrism, jabriyyah, omniscience, heedlessness to the contingent and the surprising (which is history), imperialist top-down anti-imperialism, and a complete denial of agency of the people struggling for freedom and justice. This authority's system of thought is authoritarian. It is an establishment from which dissent is a must as much as it was

from Soviet communism and its derivatives.

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New Lines Magazine

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