



# The Culture of Terrorism

*Noam Chomsky*

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## **The Culture of Terrorism** Noam Chomsky

This scathing critique of U.S. political culture is a brilliant analysis of the Iran-Contra scandal. Chomsky offers a message of hope, reminding us resistance is possible.

## **The Culture of Terrorism Details**

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## Michael Friedman says

This is Noam Chomsky's 1998 analysis of the Reagan administration's failed Central American policy that resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands as well as the destabilization of economies and governments in the name of the protection of the United States from a nonexistent enemy, global communism. Chomsky's reasoned analysis also shines the light on the complicity of the United States media in failing to report the truth behind America's illegal and immoral interference with democracy and human rights progressive, popular reforms of the dictatorships who serve our wealthy institutions. It is fascinating to learn how Reagan utilized the threat of terrorism to convince the American public to look the other way while he intervened illegally in the operations of other countries in the name of defense of our way of life that was supposedly threatened by the popular elections in Nicaragua. The same rhetoric now drives the Republican race for the presidency with racially blind hatred of Islam and Hispanics in the name of public and economic safety. See for example Ted Cruz' popular threat to carpet bomb ISIS in spite of the Geneva Convention and Marco Rubio's call for massive defense spending to save us from a foe without an airplane or a ship. The tried and true gambit of Reagan's prevarications is rising again seventeen years after Chomsky's excellent and prescient analysis.

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## Stanley Lee says

Interesting history of US foreign policy in central america.

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## Faisal Al juhani says

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## Randall Wallace says

We have been into democracy promotion for decades in other countries, but, as Noam muses in the Preface, why not try promoting it here, in the United States? This book half is half about the creation of U.S. led terror in Central America during the Reagan Years. The attempted message of the Reagan years was that violence pays... The first four freedoms taught by FDR have since been historically openly ignored whenever Noam's additional "Fifth Freedom" is deemed "incompatible" with them. Noam's "Fifth Freedom" is the freedom to exploit and dominate, and it is well documented in the historical record. One cost of such an unimpeded Fifth Freedom is the death toll under Reagan only of more than 150,000 in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua alone. In the longer term, Japan, South Korea, and Canada became noticeably wealthier thanks to their huge roles in producing for the US defense industries starting with the Vietnam

War. Isn't it lovely we offer our allies a share of the spoils in "bringing democracy" by force to whoever, whenever? Sadly, for elites, the Vietnam War also politicized American Society leading liberals at the Trilateral Commission to bemoan a "crisis of democracy". Noam's deepest lesson in every book he writes, is to look at what liberals do to collude with the worst actions of the Republicans.

Noam tells us that it is normal for governments to consider their own population as the enemy. In the questioning of Oliver North, U.S. scenarios existed for martial law, and in even turning the US over to a FEMA man who, in 1970, advocated in a memorandum "internment of all American Negroes in assemble centers or relocation camps." Under Reagan we trained for the first time, terrorist armies (think El Salvador) - armies not for combat but for spreading terror through the population. If you can't saturate non-American minds through PR, you saturate their countrysides with bombs, and their bodies with bullets. The Sandinista government had to be attacked by the U.S. for daring to helping the poor majority of Nicaragua. Noam then takes on PR miracle of unchecked faith in America's doctrine of good intentions and gives us pearls like: "the law is what the U.S. government says it is, a natural principle in a terrorist culture." This explains the media silence on U.S. led terror – and the rampant killing of trade unionists, priests, nuns, and human rights workers. In Guatemala censorship was achieved by murder among the local press. Noam says, "If international terrorists are to be shunned, then Washington must close down." Because the US is politically weak in Latin America, it has had a long historical need to use violence to stop popular organizations, as well as to evade diplomatic settlement. Every provision of the Paris Agreements regarding Vietnam, Noam shows, were violated immediately. "How would we react today to a Third World revolution that adopted the practices followed by the Founding Fathers and their descendants, endorsing literal human slavery, organizing genocidal destruction of the native population, disenfranchising males without property, women (for a mere 130 years), and people of wrong color (for a mere 180 years), and so on..." U.S. planners know their objectives require the threat of violence, so it's not surprising that even liberal Carter actively supported both the Shah and Somoza. "Functioning democracy can be tolerated at home no more than it can in Central America or elsewhere." Induced fear allows continual public acceptance of unlawful engagements against "little Satans, states or groups sufficiently weak and defenseless so that we can attack them ...without fear." "Security is only a marginal concern of security" "The instinctive desire of 'all free peoples to guard themselves from oppression' (Rousseau), may be repressed among a subordinated population, effectively removed from the political system." As regards problems with U.S. media, all 85 opinion pieces in the NYT and Wash Post about the Sandinista's were "bitterly hostile" – total conformity against empathizing with the poor of Nicaragua. Thanks to the U.S. policy, and compliant U.S. media, 9,000 Nicaraguans died and one billion dollars of unnecessary damage to the country ensued. And don't forget the U.S. Penwalt corporation, which "poisoned Lake Managua with tons of mercury while operating in Nicaragua to avoid U.S. environmental laws." Occasionally our press states the actual truth like this pearl from the WSJ: "officials are concerned that Nicaragua can cause trouble by training radical union and peasant leaders as well as guerrillas." That would threaten the U.S. which knows it's non-empathetic proxy governments can never win the hearts and minds of rural peasants anywhere, unless the cards are strongly stacked against the opposition. So, the state department intentionally turned Nicaragua into what one of them termed "the Albania of Latin America" – poor and isolated. To show how indoctrinated by lies Americans are, Noam says look anywhere for evidence that the U.S. invaded South Vietnam. It of course happened in 1962 and was obvious by 1965, but notice the total subordination of world opinion to U.S. power, including no condemnation by the UN for the attack, or even recognizing it. The Nazis taught us that all that was needed was "a mood of passive compliance", while you did what you did. The U.S. problem was how to bring the population back to "apathy and obedience" after the Vietnam War. Noam writes that our sympathy and concern for the victims of violence here and worldwide is "the authentic 'counterculture' to the dominant culture of terrorism." Brilliant book. Five Stars, as is with everything Noam writes. I'm still smiling with Noam humorously saying how, according to power, the Central American poor must be "reeling" from our "benevolence".

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## Okan Ergul says

(Türkçe bas?m?ndan okudum.) ABD d?? politikas?nda perde arkas?nda i?lerin nas?l yürüdü?ü, ama medyada nelerin yans?d???n? alg?lamak aç?s?ndan dikkate de?er bir çal??ma. 80 lerdeki mevcut duruma, özellikle Irangate örne?ine konsantre olarak , ama genel bir resim çizme çabas? içinde anlat?yor...

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## Jerry Wall says

U.S. shenanigans in Nicaragua and with Iran Contra.

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## Víctor says

Estados Unidos es un estado débil diplomáticamente, pero fuerte militarmente. Así comienza Chomsky este acucioso análisis al escándalo Irán-Contras, y todo para sostener una arriesgada (para él) hipótesis: Estados Unidos de América es un estado terrorista.

Es decir, el gobierno de los Estados Unidos siempre preferirá la vía de las armas a la de la discusión. Cualquier país que EUA considere como parte de su área de acción, lo tratará bajo las peores leyes de vasallaje, y si alguno da señales de independencia, EUA asirá cualquier pretexto, por ridículo e insostenible que sea, para ejercer una acción militar sobre dicho país.

Sin embargo, el gobierno de los Estados Unidos tiene un poder al cual le atañe mucho la opinión pública: el congreso. Si la opinión pública estadounidense se vuelve de manera determinada contra las políticas exteriores de su gobierno, el congreso recula y reclama cuentas y culpables. Pero si esta expresión de los gobernados no alcanza una masa crítica, el congreso seguirá siendo tan observador a las políticas dictadas por la Casa Blanca como el que más.

Y los medios de comunicación juegan un gran papel aquí. Su responsabilidad es convencer al pueblo que las políticas y acciones gubernamentales en el exterior son correctas, moralmente incuestionables y necesarias. Llevar la democracia y liberar al pueblo oprimido, son la razones más socorridas.

Mientras el ciudadano estadounidense promedio esté conforme y confortable, mientras no se ofenda su susceptibilidad, su gobierno tendrá carta blanca para hacer y deshacer a su gusto.

Defender los intereses estadounidenses en el extranjero siempre es la razón real y de fondo. Y estos intereses son más de índole imperialista que democrática. Es por ello que para dichos intereses, las dictaduras locales les son más afines.

La gran debacle la tuvo con Vietnam, por que al pueblo ya no le gustó, no sólo la cantidad de bajas de compatriotas, sino los escándalos de las masacres y abominaciones que se cometían ahí por el ejercito mismo.

Sin embargo, la administración reagan fue más cautelosa que su antecesora, y en lugar de enfrentamientos bélicos directos como en el pasado, montó una red de terrorismo internacional para seguir domeñando a todos esos estados que se oponían a su imperialismo. Así, utilizando mercenarios, a la CIA, y su ingente capacidad económica, el gobierno los Estados Unidos de América se encargaron de implantar sus regímenes en Centro América con gran éxito, con la gran excepción de Nicaragua. El Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional fue un hueso muy duro de roer para la administración reagan, tanto, que le costó el escándalo Irán-Contras.

Sí, la conclusión es obvia, el gobierno de los Estados Unidos es, ha sido, y parece que seguirá siendo, un régimen de vocación terrorista. Con la venia de sus muchos países satélite, a la manera de la ex-Unión Soviética. Tal vez mucho peor, por que sus estructuras de poder siguen intactas.

Un pueblo gordo y conformista, un periodismo servil y alineado, un congreso que sólo sirve al pueblo en función de su inconformidad generalizada, son los ingredientes para que el poderoso imperio estadounidense siga actuando con impunidad por todo el mundo.

Y por todo lo anterior, Wikileaks representa una gran amenaza al gobierno más poderoso del mundo.

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## **Ollie says**

It's hard to pinpoint Noam Chomsky's specialty because there are so many. The obvious answer would be linguistics. After all, the man is a professor on the subject at MIT. But what about politics and world issues? The reason Chomsky seems to have so much to say on everything is because he's really only talking about one thing: US aggression. Whether it's the Israel-Palestine problem, Vietnam, or Latin America, the US affects the fate of all nations.

The subject of Nicaragua has been interesting to me ever since I heard the Clash's album Sandinista. I know that sounds cheap, but growing up in a land far far away and close to Venezuela in the 90's, the subject of Latin American liberalism has become inescapable. And that's what the Culture of Terrorism focuses on; Nicaragua and neighboring Central American states.

One can see why he chose the name, as Chomsky right away focuses on the terror inflicted by the US on foreign states supporting whatever power is interested in stripping its citizens of their freedom. Culture of Terrorism is a thorough "study" of the US-backed Contra war on Nicaragua, and while all the treaties of the region are a bit difficult to follow, for the most part it's easy to grasp how Chomsky lays out the constant harassment and usurping of Nicaragua by the US in opposition to the rest of the world. With such isolation, is it any wonder Nicaragua cracked? Really, this book is an ABC guide to the kind of terror the US has brought to Central America, and serves as the "other" side of the story you don't hear in American journalism.

Chomsky offers some hope at the end when he mentions of there will always be people who will stand up for their freedom and integrity. Sure, but if the US is truly opposed to international terrorism then maybe it must shut itself down. And that's unnerving.

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## **Amir Seyab says**

a good book

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## **Ryan Mishap says**

Maybe a little dated but keeps the focus on the original definition of terrorism: violence by the state used to intimidate and control their populace.

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