



*Noam*

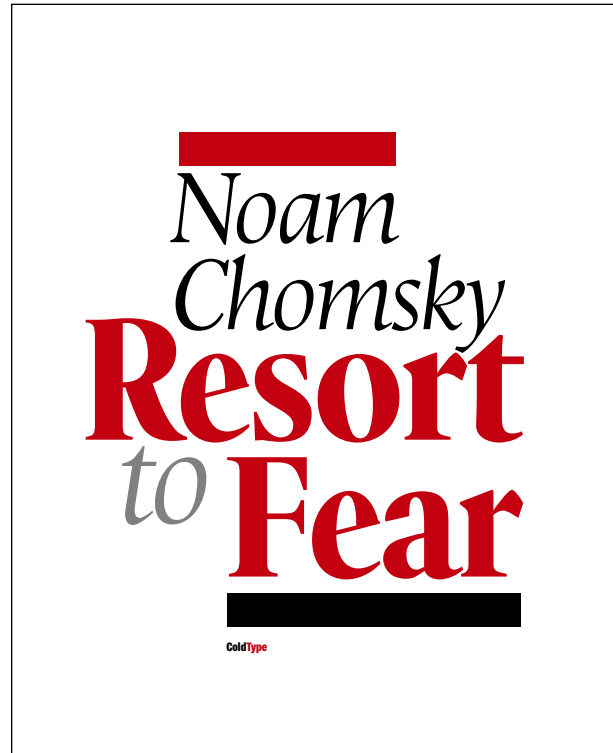
*Chomsky*

**Resort**

*to*

**Fear**





Noam Chomsky, professor of linguistics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is the author of many books, including **Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest for Global Dominance.**

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## NOAM CHOMSKY: RESORT TO FEAR

**T**he resort to fear by systems of power to discipline the domestic population has left a long and terrible trail of bloodshed and suffering, which we ignore at our peril. Recent history provides many shocking illustrations. The mid-twentieth century witnessed perhaps the most awful crimes since the Mongol invasions. The most savage were carried out where Western civilization had achieved its greatest splendors. Germany was a leading center of the sciences, the arts and literature, humanistic scholarship, and other memorable achievements. Prior to World War I, before anti-German hysteria was fanned in the West, Germany had been regarded by American political scientists as a model democracy as well, to be emulated by the West. In the mid-1930s, Germany was driven within a few years to a level of barbarism that has few historical counterparts. That was true, most notably, among the most educated and civilized sectors of the population. In his remarkable diaries of his life as a Jew under Nazism – escaping the gas chambers by a near miracle – Victor Klemperer writes these words about a German Professor friend whom he had much admired, but who had finally joined the pack:

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If one day the situation were reversed and the fate of the vanquished lay in my hands, then I would let all the ordinary folk go and even some of the leaders, who might perhaps after all have had honourable intentions and not known what they were doing. But I would have all the intellectuals strung up, and the professors three feet higher than the rest; they would be left hanging from the lamp posts for as long as was compatible with hygiene.

Klemperer's reactions were merited, and generalize to a large part of recorded history.

Complex historical events always have many causes. One crucial factor in this case was skillful manipulation of fear. The "ordinary folk" were driven to fear of a Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy to take over the world, placing the very survival of the people of Germany at risk. Extreme measures were therefore necessary, in "self-defense." Revered intellectuals went far beyond. As the Nazi storm clouds settled over the country in 1935, Martin Heidegger depicted Germany as the "most endangered" nation in the world, gripped in the "great pincers" of an onslaught against civilization itself, led in its crudest form by Russia and America. Not only was Germany the prime victim of this awesome and barbaric force, but it was also the responsibility of Germany, "the most metaphysical of nations," to lead the resistance to it. Germany stood "in the center of the Western world," and must protect the great heritage of classical Greece from "annihilation," relying on the "new spiritual energies unfolding historically from out of the center." The "spiritual energies" continued to unfold in ways that were evident enough when he delivered that message, to which he and other leading intellectuals continued to adhere.

The paroxysm of slaughter and annihilation did not end with the use of weapons that may very well bring the species to a bitter end.

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We should also not forget that these species-terminating weapons were created by the most brilliant, humane, and highly educated figures of modern civilization, working in isolation, and so entranced by the beauty of the work in which they were engaged that they apparently paid little attention to the consequences: significant scientific protests against nuclear weapons began in the labs in Chicago, after the termination of their role in creation of the bomb, not in Los Alamos, where the work went on until the grim end. Not quite the end. The official US Air Force history relates that after the bombing of Nagasaki, when Japan's submission to unconditional surrender was certain, General Hap Arnold "wanted as big a finale as possible," a 1000-plane daylight raid on defenseless Japanese cities. The last bomber returned to its base just as agreement to unconditional surrender was formally received. The Air Force chief, General Carl Spaatz, had preferred that the grand finale be a third nuclear attack on Tokyo, but was dissuaded. Tokyo was a "poor target," having already been incinerated in the carefully-executed firestorm in March, leaving perhaps 100,000 charred corpses in one of history's worst crimes.

Such matters are excluded from war crimes tribunals, and largely expunged from history. By now they are hardly known beyond circles of activists and specialists. At the time they were publicly hailed as a legitimate exercise of self-defense against a vicious enemy that had reached the ultimate level of infamy by bombing US military bases in its Hawaiian and Philippine colonies.

It is perhaps worth bearing in mind that Japan's December 1941 bombings – "the date which will live in infamy," in FDR's ringing words – were more than justified under the doctrines of "anticipatory self-defense" that prevail among the leaders of today's self-designated "enlightened states," the US and its British client. Japanese leaders knew that B-17 Flying Fortresses were coming off the Boeing

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production lines, and were surely familiar with the public discussions in the US explaining how they could be used to incinerate Japan's wooden cities in a war of extermination, flying from Hawaiian and Philippine bases – “to burn out the industrial heart of the Empire with fire-bombing attacks on the teeming bamboo ant heaps,” as retired Air Force General Chennault recommended in 1940, a proposal that “simply delighted” President Roosevelt. Evidently, that is a far more powerful justification for bombing military bases in US colonies than anything conjured up by Bush-Blair and their associates in their execution of “pre-emptive war” – and accepted, with tactical reservations, throughout the mainstream of articulate opinion.

The comparison, however, is inappropriate. Those who dwell in teeming bamboo ant heaps are not entitled to such emotions as fear. Such feelings and concerns are the prerogatives only of the “rich men dwelling at peace within their habitations,” in Churchill's rhetoric, the “satisfied nations, who wished nothing more for themselves than what they had,” and to whom, therefore, “the government of the world must be entrusted” if there is to be peace – a certain kind of peace, in which the rich men must be free from fear.

Just how secure the rich men must be from fear is revealed graphically by highly-regarded scholarship on the new doctrines of “anticipatory self-defense” crafted by the powerful. The most important contribution with some historical depth is by one of the leading contemporary historians, John Lewis Gaddis of Yale University. He traces the Bush doctrine to his intellectual hero, the grand strategist John Quincy Adams. In the paraphrase of the New York Times, Gaddis “suggests that Bush's framework for fighting terrorism has its roots in the lofty, idealistic tradition of John Quincy Adams and Woodrow Wilson.” We can put aside Wilson's shameful record, and keep to the origins of the lofty, idealistic tradition, which Adams established in a famous state paper justifying Andrew Jackson's conquest of Florida in

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the first Seminole war in 1818. The war was justified in self-defense, Adams argued. Gaddis agrees that its motives were legitimate security concerns. In Gaddis's version, after Britain sacked Washington in 1814, US leaders recognized that "expansion is the path to security" and therefore conquered Florida, a doctrine now expanded to the whole world by Bush – properly he argues.

Gaddis cites the right scholarly sources, primarily historian William Earl Weeks, but omits what they say. We learn a lot about the precedents for current doctrines, and the current consensus, by looking at what Gaddis omits. Weeks describes in lurid detail what Jackson was doing in the "exhibition of murder and plunder known as the First Seminole war," which was just another phase in his project of "removing or eliminating native Americans from the southeast," underway long before 1814. Florida was a problem both because it had not yet been incorporated in the expanding American empire and because it was a "haven for Indians and runaway slaves...fleeing either the wrath of Jackson or slavery." There was in fact an Indian attack, which Jackson and Adams used as a pretext: US forces drove a band of Seminoles off their lands, killing several of them and burning their village to the ground. The Seminoles retaliated by attacking a supply boat under military command. Seizing the opportunity, Jackson "embarked on a campaign of terror, devastation, and intimidation," destroying villages and "sources of food in a calculated effort to inflict starvation on the tribes, who sought refuge from his wrath in the swamps." So matters continued, leading to Adams's highly regarded state paper, which endorsed Jackson's unprovoked aggression to establish in Florida "the dominion of this republic upon the odious basis of violence and bloodshed." These are the words of the Spanish Ambassador, a "painfully precise description," Weeks writes. Adams "had consciously distorted, dissembled, and lied about the goals and conduct of American foreign policy to both Congress and the public,"

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Weeks continues, grossly violating his proclaimed moral principles, “implicitly defending Indian removal, slavery, and the use of military force without congressional approval.” The crimes of Jackson and Adams “proved but a prelude to a second war of extermination against [the Seminoles],” in which the remnants either fled to the West, to enjoy the same fate later, “or were killed or forced to take refuge in the dense swamps of Florida.” Today, Weeks concludes, “the Seminoles survive in the national consciousness as the mascot of Florida State University” a typical and instructive case.

Weeks also stresses that Adams’s forceful endorsement of Jackson’s crimes shifted the power to make war from Congress to the Executive, in violation of the Constitution, a principle that remains in force, not troubling strict constructionists. He points out that Adams’s rhetoric also established the “presidential ‘rhetoric of empire’ designed to marshal public (as well as congressional) support for its policies,... a durable and essential aspect of American diplomacy inherited and elaborated by successive generations of American statesmen but fundamentally unchanged over time.” The rhetorical framework rests on three pillars: “the assumption of the unique moral virtue of the United States, the assertion of its mission to redeem the world” by spreading its professed ideals and the “‘American way of life,’ and the faith in the nation’s divinely ordained destiny.” The theological framework undercuts reasoned debate, and reduces policy issues to a choice between Good and Evil, thus reducing the threat of democracy. Critics can be dismissed as “anti-American,” an interesting concept borrowed from the lexicon of totalitarianism. And the population must huddle under the umbrella of power, in fear that its way of life and destiny are under imminent threat.

The issue of defense against Britain never remotely arose: British Minister Castlereagh was so eager to cement Anglo-American rela-



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tions that he even overlooked Jackson's murder of two innocent British citizens, which Adams defended for its "salutary efficacy for terror and example." Adams was heeding the words of Tacitus, his favorite historian, Weeks suggests: that "crime once exposed had no refuge but in audacity."

The goal of Adams's diplomacy was not security, but territorial expansion, to the Pacific. That was achieved, though the British threat was not entirely overcome. British military force barred the conquest of Canada and Cuba, which, Adams predicted, would drop into US hands like a "ripe fruit" by the laws of political gravitation, once the US succeeded in subduing its British enemy. By the end of the century, the laws of political gravitation had shifted, as Adams had predicted, and the US was able to intervene to bar Cuba's liberation from Spain, turning it into a "virtual colony" until 1959. Since the early days after the long-delayed liberation in 1959, the island has been the target of unremitting terror and economic strangulation, because of its "successful defiance" of policies tracing back to the days of grand strategist Adams, we learn from declassified documents of the Kennedy-Johnson years. It is also the site of the infamous Guantanamo torture chamber, on land effectively stolen from Cuba and kept by the leader of the enlightened states in part to prevent Cuban economic development.

Filling in the blanks, the picture supports Gaddis's judgment about the precedents for the Bush doctrine and its implementation. As for the expansion of the precedent to the entire world, others may judge for themselves. But keeping to the present theme, within the culture of enlightenment virtually any action, however horrendous, is justified by fear, which is legitimate if there is any possibility, however remote, that something might interfere with the goals of the rich men living at peace within their ample habitations – goals that are necessarily

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noble, as the intellectual classes soberly explain, though occasionally some light breaks through. Churchill revealed his grasp of reality in internal debate in Parliament in 1914, when he was urging an expanded military budget:

we are not a young people with *an innocent record* and a scanty inheritance. We have engrossed to ourselves . . . an *altogether disproportionate share* of the wealth and traffic of the world. We have got all we want in territory, and our claim to be left in the unmolested enjoyment of vast and splendid possessions, *mainly acquired by violence, largely maintained by force*, often seems less reasonable to others than to us.

The italicized phrases are those that Churchill omitted when he published these words years later. The meaning of the phrases need not be explained in India. They are not part of the internalized history of the “enlightened states.” They are dispatched to the same oblivion as other exercises of the “the lofty, idealistic tradition” by which the “rich men...engrossed to [them]selves an altogether disproportionate share of the wealth and traffic of the world,” and must retain it, in “unmolested enjoyment,” resorting to justified self-defense if they perceive any potential challenge, mobilizing their population by the traditional and well-practiced device of fear.

There is no need to review how the people of the most powerful country of the world have been driven to desperate fear for their survival in recent years, and what measures their leaders have taken to allay these fears. To be sure, the fears are not manufactured from nothing. Even the most vulgar propaganda must have some basis in reality. In this case the threat of terror of the doctrinally admissible kind – *their* terror against us – is very real. It is hard to overestimate

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the potential dangers of the Jihadist terror that was organized for traditional reasons of state by the current incumbents in Washington and their immediate mentors, along with their associates. Sooner or later it is likely to be united with WMD, as was known long before 9-11. The threat is being consciously escalated by global leaders. Bush and Blair were well aware that the invasion of Iraq would be likely to enhance the threat of terror, as it did, but terror does not rank high among their priorities, as this and many other examples illustrate.

The US population is overwhelmingly opposed to the use of force except in self-defense against ongoing or imminent attack. Three-quarters of Americans believe the government had no right to invade Iraq if it was not developing WMD or cooperating with al-Qaeda. Half believe that the invasion was justified. There is no contradiction. Rather, the numbers reveal, once again, the enormous effectiveness of manipulation of fear. Even after official inquiries have completely undermined government-media propaganda about Saddam's WMD and links to al-Qaeda, half the population continue to believe the charges, and thus support not only the invasion – the “supreme international crime differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole,” in the wording of the Nuremberg Tribunal – but also the ongoing war crimes that are depicted without shame on the front-pages of the world's greatest newspaper, always in self-defense against evil forces threatening us with destruction.

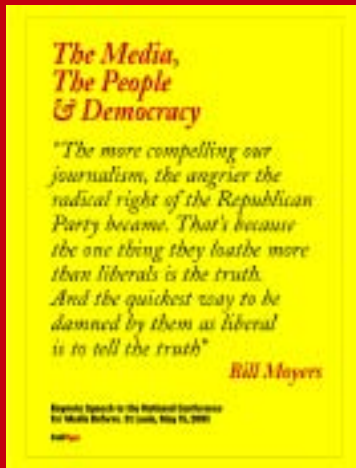
We cannot underestimate the threat of terror, or the cynicism of centers of power in pursuit of their own often despicable ends, or the murderous violence to which they will resort if authority is granted to them by a frightened population.

It is within this context that we should, I believe, consider the terrible events of 13 December, the reaction to them on the part of the gov-

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ernment and media, and the detailed investigation carried out in this important and careful study. And it is within the same context, I think, that the people of India should respond constructively to the call for a serious parliamentary inquiry into what actually happened and its roots. Indian democracy is one of the triumphs of the twentieth century, but a fragile one. The plant has to be protected and nurtured, or it can all too easily wither, with consequences that are sure to be grim.

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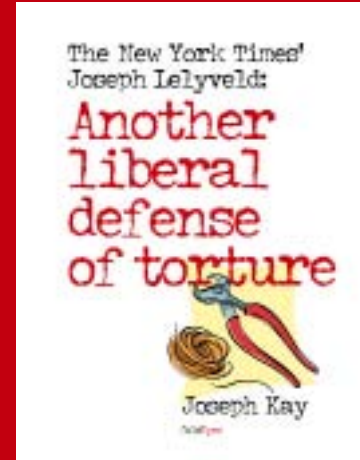
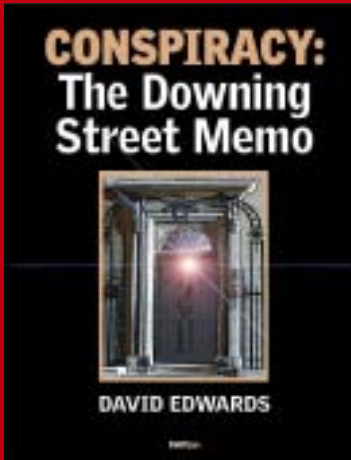
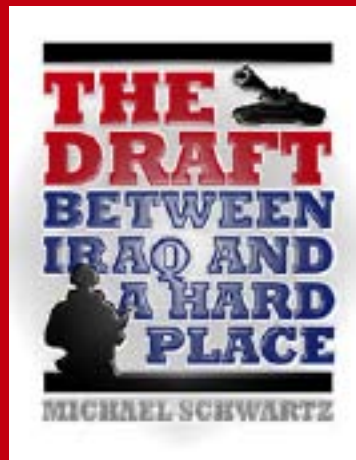
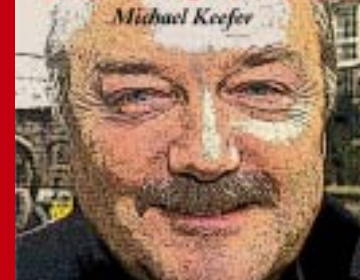


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