

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نباشد تن من مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم
بدین بوم و بر زنده یک تن مباد
از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

BY ROBERT HUNZIKER

19.08.2024

Noam Chomsky's Vision of the Future

A video interview with Noam Chomsky conducted at the University of Arizona is extraordinarily contemporary and insightful with a powerful message: *What Does the Future Hold Q&A With Noam Chomsky* hosted by Lori Poloni-Staudinger, Dean of School of Behavioral Sciences and Professor, School of Government and Public Policy, University of Arizona.

This article is a partial and edited transcript of some of Chomsky's responses to questions, and it includes third-party supporting facts surrounding his statements about the two biggest risks to humanity's continual existence.

Noam Chomsky (95), famous dissident and father of modern linguistics, considered one of the world's leading intellectuals, is recovering from a stroke he suffered at age 94 and is now living with his wife in Brazil. According to a report in Amy Goodman's Democracy Now d/d July 2, 2024, this past June Brazilian President Lula personally visited Chomsky, holding his hand, saying: "You are one of the most influential people of my life" personally witnessed by Vijay Prashad, co-author with Noam Chomsky, *The Withdrawal* (The New Press).

Indeed, Noam Chomsky is established as one of the most influential intellectuals of the 21st century.

Chomsky joined the School of Behavioral Sciences in 2017 and taught "Consequences of Capitalism."

What Does the Future Hold?

Question: geopolitics, unipolar versus multipolar

Chomsky: First there are two crises that determine whether it is even appropriate to consider how geopolitics will look in the future: (1) threat of nuclear war (2) the climate crisis.

“If the climate crisis is not dealt with in the next few years, human society is essentially finished. Everything else is moot unless these two crises are dealt with.”

(This paragraph is not part of Chomsky’s answer) Regarding Chomsky’s warning, several key indicators of the climate crisis are flashing red, not green. For example, nine years ago 195 nations at the UN climate conference Paris ‘15 agreed to take measures to mitigate CO2 emissions to hold global warming to under 1.5°C pre-industrial. Yet, within only nine years of that agreement amongst 195 nations, according to Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S), global temperatures exceeded 1.5°C (2.7°F) above preindustrial for the first time in human history for a 12-month period from February 2023 to January 2024 and now fast approaching danger zones. Obviously, nations of the world did not follow their own dictates, and if not them, who will?

Paleoclimatology has evidence of what to expect if the “climate crisis,” as labeled by Chomsky, is not dealt with (The following paragraph is also not part of Chomsky’s answer): “While today’s CO2-driven climate change scenario is unprecedented in human history, similar circumstances existed in the geological record that give us an idea of what to expect in the way of global sea level rise, and the process that will get us there. About 3.2 million years ago, during the Pliocene epoch, CO2 levels were about 400 ppm (427 ppm today) and temperatures were 2-3°C above the “pre-industrial” temperatures of 1850-1880. At the same time, proxy data indicate global sea level was about 52 feet (within a 39-foot to 66-foot range) higher than today.” (Source: [The Sleeping Giant Awakens](#), Climate Adaptation Center, May 21, 2024)

Maybe that is why the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) strongly suggests keeping temperatures ideally below 1.5°C and certainly not above 2.0°C pre-industrial.

Chomsky on World Power: Currently the center of world power, whether unipolar or multipolar is very much in the news. This issue has roots going back to the end of WWII when the US established overwhelming worldwide power. But now the Ukraine war has the world very much divided with most of world outside of the EU, US and its allies calling for diplomatic settlement. But the US position is that the war must continue to severely weaken Russia.

Consequently, Ukraine is dividing the world, and it shows up in the framework of unipolar versus multipolar. For example, the war has driven the EU away from independent status to firm control by the US. In turn the EU is headed towards industrial decline because of disruption of its natural trading partners, e.g., Russia is full of natural resources that the EU is lacking, which economist have always referred to as a “marriage made in heaven,” a natural trading relationship that has now been broken. (footnote: EU industrial production down 3.9% past 12 months)

And the Ukrainian imbroglio is cutting off EU access to markets in China e.g., China has been an enormous market for German industrial products. Meanwhile, the US is insisting upon a unipolar framework of world order that wants not only the EU but the world to be incorporated within something like the NATO system. Under US pressure NATO has expanded its reach to the Indo-Pacific region, meaning NATO is now obligated to take part in the US conflict with China.

Meantime, the rest of the world is trying to develop a multipolar world with several independent sectors of power. The BRICS countries Brazil, Russia, India, China, Indonesia, South Africa, want an independent source of power of their own. They are 40% of world economy that’s independent of US sanctions and of the US dollar.

These are developing conflicts over one raging issue and one developing issue. Ukraine is the raging issue; the developing issue is US conflict with China, which is developing its own projects in Eurasia, Africa, Middle East, South Africa, South Asia, and Latin America.

The US is determined to prevent China’s economic development throughout the world. The Biden administration has “virtually declared a kind of war with China” by demanding that Western allies refuse to permit China to carry out technological development.

For example, the US insist others do not allow China access to any technology that has any US parts in it. This includes everything, as for example, Netherlands has a world-class lithographic industry which produces critical parts for semi-conductors for the modern high-tech economy. Now, Netherlands must determine whether it’ll move to an independent course to sell to China, or not... the same is true for Samsung, South Korea, and Japan.

The world is splintered along those lines as the framework for the foreseeable future.

Question— Will multinational corporations gain too much power and influence?

Chomsky suggests looking at them right now... US based multinationals control about one-half of the world’s wealth. They are first or second in every domain like

manufacturing and retail; no one else is close. It's extraordinary power. Based upon GDP, the US has 20% of world GDP, but if you look at US multinationals it's more like 50%. Multinationals have extraordinary power over domestic policy in both the US and in other capitalistic countries. So, how will multinationals react when told they cannot deal with a major market, like China?

How does this develop over future years? The EU is going into a period of decline because of breaking relationships in trade and commercial business with the East. Yet, it's not sure that the EU will stay subordinate to the US and willingly go into decline, or will the EU join the rest of the world and move into a more complex multipolar world and integrate with countries in the East? This is yet to be determined. For example, France's President Emmanuel Macron (2017-) has been vilified and condemned for saying that after Russia is driven out of Ukraine, a way must be found to accommodate Russia within an international system, an initial crack in the US/EU relationship.

Threat of nuclear war question: Russia suspended the START Nuclear Arms Treaty with the US and how important is this to the threat of nuclear war?

Chomsky: It is very significant. It is the last remaining arms control treaty, the new START Treaty, Trump almost cancelled it. The treaty was due to expire in February when Biden took over in time to extend it, which he did.

Keep in mind that the US was instrumental in creating a regime which somewhat mitigates the threat of nuclear war, which means "terminal war." We talk much too casually about nuclear war. There can't be a nuclear war. If there is, we're finished. It's why the Doomsday Clock is set at 90 seconds to midnight, the closest it's been.

Starting with George W. Bush the US began dismantling arms control. Bush dismantled the ABM Treaty, a missile treaty very significantly part of the arms control system and an enormous threat to Russia. So, the dismantling allowed the US to set up installations right at the border of Russia. It's a severe threat to Russia. And Russia has reacted.

The Trump administration got rid of the INF Treaty, the Reagan-Gorbachev treaty of 1987 which ended short-range missiles in Europe. Those missiles are now back in place on the borders of Russia. Trump, to make it clear that we meant business, arranged missile launches right away upon breaking of the treaty.

Trump destroyed the Open Skies Treaty which originated with Eisenhower stating that each side should share information about what the other side was doing to reduce the threat of misunderstanding.

Only the new START Treaty remains. And Russia suspended it. START restricts the number of strategic weapons for each side. The treaty terminates in 2026, but it's suspended by Russia anyway. So, in effect there are no agreed upon restraints to increasing nuclear weapons.

Both sides already have way more nuclear weapons than necessary; One Trident nuclear submarine could destroy a couple hundred cities all over the world. And land based nuclear missile locations are known by both sides. So, if there is a threat, those would be hit immediately. Which means if there's a threat, "you'd better send'em off, use'em or lose'em." This obviously is a very touchy, extraordinarily risky situation because one mistake could amplify very quickly.

The new START Treaty that's been suspended by Russia did restrict the enormous excessive number of strategic weapons. So, we should be in negotiations right now to expand it, restore it, and reinstitute the treaties the US has dismantled, the INF Treaty, Reagan-Gorbachev treaty, ABM Treaty, Open Stars Treaty should all be brought back.

Question: Will society muster the will for change for equity, prosperity, and sustainability?

Chomsky: There is no answer. It's up to the population to come to grips with issues and say we are not going to march to the precipice and fall over it. But it's exactly what our leaders are telling us to do. Look at the environmental crisis. It is well understood that we may have enough time to control heating of the environment, destruction of habitat, destruction of the oceans which is going to lead to total catastrophe. It's not like everybody will die all at once, but we're going to reach irreversible tipping points that becomes just a steady decline. To know how serious it is, look at particular areas of the world.

The Middle East region is one of the most rapidly heating regions of the world at rates twice as fast as the rest of the world. Projections by the end of the century at current trajectories show sea level in Mediterranean will rise about 10 feet.

Look at a map where people live, it is indescribable. Around Southeast Asia and peasants in India are trying to survive temperatures in the 120s where less than 10% of population has air conditioning. This will cause huge migrations from areas of the world where life will become unlivable.

Fossil fuel companies are so profitable that they've decided to quit any sustainable efforts in favor of letting profits run as fast and as far as possible. They're opening new oil and gas fields that can produce another 30-40 years but at that point we'll all be finished.

We have the same issue with nuclear weapons as with the environment. If these two issues are not dealt with, in the not-too-distant future, it'll be all over. The population needs to "have the will" to stop it.

Question: How do we muster that will?

Chomsky: Talk to neighbors, join community organizations, join activist's groups, press Congress, get out into the streets if necessary. How have things happened in the past? For example, back in the 1960s small groups of women got together, forming consciousness-raising groups and it was 1975 (Sex Discrimination Act) that women were granted the right of persons peers under US domestic law, prior to that we're still back in the age of the founding fathers when women were property Look at the Civil Rights movement. Go back to the 1950s, Rosa Parks refused to move from her seat on a bus that was planned by an organized group of activists that led to the Montgomery Bus Boycott, big change... in 1960 a couple of black students in No. Carolina decided to sit in at a lunch counter segregated. Immediately arrested, and the next day another group came... later they became organized as SNCC, Student Nonviolent Coordinated Committee. Young people from the North started to join. Next freedom buses started running to Alabama to convince black farmers to cast a vote. It went on this way, building, until you got civil rights legislation in Washington.

What's happening right now as an example of what people can do? The Biden administration passed the Inflation Reduction Act, IRA. It's mostly a climate change act. The only way you can get banks and fossil fuel companies to stop destroying the world is to bribe them. That's basically our system. But IRA is not the substantial program that Biden presented. It is watered down. The original came out of Bernie Sander's office. As for the background for that, young people, from the Sunrise Movement, were active and organizing and sat in on Congressional offices. AOC joined them. A bill came out of this, but Republican opposition cut back the original bill by nearly 100% They are a denialist party. They want to destroy the world in the interest of private profit. The final IRA bill is nowhere near enough.

Summation: Chomsky sees a world of turmoil trying to sort out whether unipolar or multipolar wins the day with the Ukrainian war serving as a catalyst to change. Meanwhile, the EU carries the brunt of its impact. Meantime, nuclear arms treaties have literally dissolved in the face of a tenuous situation along the Russia/EU borders with newly armed missiles pointed at Russia's heartland. In the face of this touch-and-go Russia vs. the West potentially explosive scenario, the global climate system is under

attack via excessive fossil fuel emissions cranking up global temperatures beyond what 195 countries agreed was a danger zone.

Chomsky sees a nervous nuclear weapons-rattling high-risk world flanked by unmitigated deterioration of ecosystems that global warming steadily, assuredly takes down for the count, as global temperatures set new records. He calls for individuals to take action, do whatever necessary to change the trajectory of nuclear weaponry and climate change to save society. Chomsky offered several examples of small groups of people acting together, over time, turning into serious protests and ultimately positive legislation.

This article covers the first 34 minutes of a 52-minute video: [Noam Chomsky: About the Future of Our World](#).

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed individuals can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” (Margaret Mead, anthropologist)

Robert Hunziker lives in Los Angeles and can be reached at rlhunziker@gmail.com.

AUGUST 16, 2024