

## Noam Chomsky - Why Does the U.S. Support Israel?

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**Noam Chomsky (NC):** Why does the United States where it is? Well, there's a history and a very interesting one that actually goes back a long time. One thing to remember is that Christian Zionism is a very powerful force, which goes back long before Jewish Zionism. In England, particularly Christian Zionism was a powerful force among British elites. It's part of the motivation for the Balfour Declaration and for Britain's support for Jewish colonisation of Israel. Remember, the Bible said, you know, and that's a big part of British elite culture. Same in the United States. Woodrow Wilson was a devout Christian who read the Bible every day. So did Harry Truman. In the Roosevelt administration, one of the leading officials, Harold Ickes, once described the return of the Jews to Palestine as the greatest event in history. It's realising the lesson of the Bible. These are deeply religious countries in which the biblical commands, so called, are taken quite literally.

**NC:** Also, this is just part of colonisation. This is the last phase of European colonisation. And notice that the countries that are most strongly in support of Israel are not just the United States, it's the United States, Australia and Canada, the offshoots of England; "anglosphere" sometimes called. Unusual forms of imperialism. These are settler colonial societies, societies in which the – not like India, not like the British in India say - , the societies of South Africa was a little like this or Algeria under the French. Settler colonial societies in which the settlers came in, essentially eliminated the native population. Also driven by religious principles, very religious groups driven by Christian Zionism. Those are major cultural factors.

**NC:** There are also significant geostrategic factors. And you go back to 1948, there was actually a split between the State Department and the Pentagon in the United States over how to react to the new state of Israel. The State Department was not committed strongly to Israeli conquests, the establishment of the state and was concerned about the refugees. It wanted an implementation of the refugee problem. The Pentagon, on the other hand, was very impressed with Israel's military potential. The Israeli military successes. If you look back at the internal record and declassified, the Joint Chiefs of Staff described Israel as the second largest

military force in the region after Turkey and a potential base for U.S. power in the region. And that continued, can't run through the whole record, but in 1958, when there was a serious crisis in the region, Israel was the only state that strongly cooperated with Britain and the United States. And it won plenty of support from the governments and the military for that reason.

**NC:** 1967 is when the current relations with Israel were pretty much established. Israel performed a major service to the United States by destroying a secular Arab nationalism, a major enemy of the United States, and supporting radical Islam, which the U.S. supported. And it continues right until the present. Right now we saw an example of that just during the latest Gaza attack. You recall that at one point Israel began to run out of munitions during the assault, despite the fact that it's armed to the teeth. That the United States provided Israel with additional munitions through the Pentagon and notice where they were taken from. These were U.S. munitions pre-positioned in Israel for eventual use by U.S. forces, one of many signs of how Israel is regarded as essentially a military offshoot of the United States, very close intelligence relations that go way back. Many other connections.

**NC:** And the media tend to take up, to support the policy of the government with very few, you know, kind of little questioning around the edges. But basically, accept the policy. So, for example, take another issue, take the U.S. invasion of Iraq. You cannot find the phrase U.S. invasion of Iraq in the U.S. media. There was obviously an invasion, a blatant act of aggression, a textbook case of what the Nuremberg trials called the "supreme international crime", cannot be mentioned. President Obama is praised as an opponent of the invasion. What did he say? He said it's a mistake. It's a strategic blunder. We're not going to get away with it. That's about it. That's the kind of opposition that you heard from the German general staff during Hitler's invasion of Russia. It's a blunder. You shouldn't do it. Should knock off England first. That's regarded as opposition.

**NC:** The same in Vietnam. There's now a commemoration underway, big commemoration of U.S. sacrifices in Vietnam. Try to find the phrase U.S. invasion of South Vietnam, there or anywhere in the past years, since 1961, when it took place. Nonexistent, maybe on Democracy Now! or what I write, but way out of the fringe. And this is not unique to the United States. Take, say Britain. Right now there's interesting debates in the British literary journals, like the Times Literary Supplement, as to whether Britain should finally begin to recognise the genocidal, the word that's used, genocidal character of British colonisation hundreds of years ago. Should Britain begin to face it? You know, you can ask that question in many places.

**NC:** The tendency of the intellectual community to go along like a herd in support of state power, private power is just overwhelming. Intellectuals like to think of themselves as dissident, critical, courageous, standing up against power. Absolutely untrue. You look at the historical record, that's a small fringe and they're usually punished. The mainstream tends to

be what was once called a "herd of independent minds" marching in support of state power. Nothing new here. Unfortunate, you've got to fight against it, not new.

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