

HIGHLIGHTS

- BIG TEN  
University Presses
- BLACK HISTORY  
MONTH
- LITERATURE IN  
TRANSLATION
- NATURE
- COMICS

www.forewordmagazine.com

GLOBAL POLICY

**Perilous Power: The Middle East and U.S. Foreign Policy: Dialogues on Terror, Democracy, War, and Justice**

Noam Chomsky and Gilbert Achcar  
 Paradigm Publishers  
 Softcover \$18.95 (320pp) 978-1-59451-313-8

**Higher Realism: A New Foreign Policy for the United States**

Seyom Brown  
 Paradigm Publishers  
 Hardcover \$24.95 (256pp)  
 978-1-59451-398-5

Politicians boast about spreading democracy. Armed forces clash. Civilians suffer and die. Pundits debate. Solutions are illusive. Another grand plan collapses into rubble. In the season of political change, many books have appeared with analysis

*The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the fears of a new pandemic, global warming, the proliferation of nuclear weapons, hunger-driven food riots, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the worldwide financial crisis are events that will touch each and every one of us.*

and policy proposals written to advise the new U.S. president. Noam Chomsky, MIT Linguistics professor and prolific writer whose books include *9-11* and *Failed States*, and Gilbert Achcar, professor at the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies and author of *The Clash of Barbarisms* and *The 33-Day War*, reissue their extended conversation about the nature and history of Middle East conflicts and U.S. foreign policy.

Both agree that this rise of terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism is the direct outcome of U.S. policy decisions that stretch back over decades of interventions, overthrows, and manipulation. Many of the secular movements such as Gamal Abdel-Nasser's pan-Arab nationalism and socialist and communist elements in the Palestinian struggle were considered counter to U.S. interests. The arming of the Mujahideen against the USSR in Afghanistan in the 1980s and the support for the ultra-

conservative Wahhabis Islamic sect in Saudi Arabia, contributed to the weakening of secular nationalism and strengthened Islamic fundamentalism. So did the 1953 overthrow of the democratically elected prime minister of Iran, Mohammed Mossadegh, and the installation of the bloody pro-U.S. Shah; the 1977 backing of General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq in Pakistan; and the 2003 invasion and occupation of Iraq.

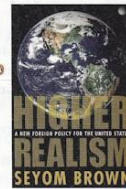
According to Chomsky, the U.S. repeatedly finds itself in the position of opposing democratic elections in places like Egypt, Lebanon, and Palestine because, "The wrong people might win"—like the Muslim Brotherhood, Hezbollah, or Hamas. "They support democracy if and only if it conforms to U.S. economic and strategic objectives."

During their in-depth and riveting discussion, Chomsky and Achcar review the modern history of the U.S. involvement in the Middle East and discuss many of the nuances that are left out of the sound-bite-loving news cycle. The book has

been updated from the hardcover release to include additional conversations from March 2008.

Seyom Brown's approach in *Higher Realism* is to focus on a guiding philosophy to organize foreign policy. Brown is the John Goodwin Tower Distinguished Chair in International Politics and National Security Director of Studies at the Tower Center for Political Studies at Southern Methodist University, has held positions at the RAND Corporation, and is presently a Senior Advisor at MIT's Security Studies Program. His previous books include *The Illusion of Control: Force and Foreign Policy in the 21st Century* and *Human Rights in World Politics*.

The principle of *Higher Realism* "...does not assume that what is good for the United States is, by definition good for the world. But it does recognize that, more and more, what is good for the world is good for the United States." A well-functioning global



economy, a healthy planet, respect for cultures and religious traditions, reducing the use of military force, and lessening poverty and diseases in poorer countries have not always been priorities for the foreign policy goals of the U.S. However, Brown argues that in the new epoch of trans-continental immigration, massive globalization, interconnected national economies, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (particularly nuclear weapons), these interests are vital to the continuing strength and health of the U.S.

Brown's outlook is based on his analysis of the change from a bipolar world that revolved politically around the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., to a poly-polar world of traditional states, alliances (like the European Union), emerging economies (like China and India), and non-state actors (like Al-Qaeda and Hezbollah). In a multi-polar world, actions ripple, rife with unintended consequences.

Taken together, these two books provide background and several possible paths for the next administration to take in foreign relations and the resolution of international conflicts. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the fears of a new pandemic, global warming, the proliferation of nuclear weapons, hunger-driven food riots, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the worldwide financial crisis are events that will touch each and every one of us. These authors feel strongly that it is in the interest of humanity that U.S. foreign policy catches up with that reality. Foreign policy experts and ordinary readers will benefit from deeply analytical studies like these. (October/November) *Deirdre Sinnott*

*Deirdre Sinnott, a frequent contributor to ForeWord, is a memoirist, speaker, and writing coach. She is a former theatrical stage manager and grass-roots activist. Her writing has appeared in literary magazines, newspapers, and on numerous websites. Visit her website at www.DeirdreSinnott.com.*