

Chomsky: Trump's Actions On Syria Reflect The Foreign Policy Of A Con Man



Donald Trump's handling of U.S. foreign policy with Syria has baffled and angered both the diplomatic and military establishments in the United States. Nonetheless, he continues to maintain power as "an effective con man who has a good sense of what animates his voting

base," Noam Chomsky argues in the exclusive interview for *Truthout* that follows.

Trump rose to power with the aid of vitriolic but disingenuous "anti-establishment" rhetoric that appealed to millions of disgruntled voters. Essentially, Trump promised to "drain the swamp" in Washington, and to advance a domestic and foreign policy agenda serving U.S. national interests and those of "average people." However, Trumpism in practice has meant something different: rolling back the remaining tatters of liberalism on the domestic front, sharpening racist xenophobia, facilitating the rise of white nationalism and eroding longstanding global alliances that the United States formed after the end of World War II. *Truthout's* C.J. Polychroniou asked Chomsky to share his thoughts on Trump's stance toward Syria, the impeachment effort against the president and the dynamics of the 2020 election.

C.J. Polychroniou: Noam, since coming to office, Trump has shown on numerous occasions that he is not a normal foreign policy president. But can you make any sense out of his stance toward Syria?

Noam Chomsky: The first of Trump's recent steps was to withdraw the small U.S. contingent that was a deterrent to Turkey's expansion of its invasion of Syria and to authorize Erdoğan's plans to extend his atrocities and ethnic cleansing of Syrian Kurds. His second step was to move U.S. troops to "secure" the oil-producing areas. The latter, apparently after he was told about the oil, is easy to understand. He has held all along that our only standing interest in the Middle

East is to “secure” its oil for our own benefit. As for the first step, we can only speculate, but it seems quite likely that the motive is what guides him consistently: How will the action affect me? Trump is an effective con man who has a good sense of what animates his voting base. In this case, he presumably expected (correctly it seems) that withdrawing a few hundred troops would appeal to the sector of the population that resonates to his message that America is foolishly expending its blood and treasure to help “unworthy” people who don’t even thank us for our sacrifices on their behalf, and that Trump is the first president to stand up for the suffering American people instead of giving everything away to foreigners out of stupidity (or treachery).

It’s worth recalling that [repeated](#) polls have [shown](#) that Americans vastly overestimate the scale of foreign aid — and recommend that it be considerably higher than it actually is (putting aside what constitutes “aid”).

Much has been written and said about the betrayal of the Kurds, a U.S. ally in the war against ISIS (also known as Daesh). This isn’t, however, the first time that the U.S. has betrayed the Kurds and other former allies.

Betrayal of the Kurds has been virtually a qualification for office since Ford-Kissinger abandoned the Kurds to the mercy of Saddam Hussein when they were no longer needed. Reagan went so far as to support his friend Saddam’s chemical warfare campaign against Iraqi Kurds, seeking to shift the blame to Iran and blocking congressional efforts to respond to these hideous crimes. Clinton’s method was to provide the arms for the murderous government assault on Turkish Kurds, which killed tens of thousands, wiped out 3,500 towns and villages, and drove hundreds of thousands from their homes. (See Noam Chomsky, *The New Military Humanism*, Chapter 3. London: Pluto Press, 1999). Clinton’s flood of military aid increased along with the shocking crimes, as Turkey became the prime recipient of American arms (outside of Israel-Egypt, a separate category).

Trump’s contribution is particularly disgusting. The Kurds lost 11,000 soldiers, men and women, leading the war against ISIS for which Trump claims credit, helped by some U.S. special forces (five casualties are reported) and air support. Erdoğan demanded that Kurds eliminate defensive fortifications (filling in trenches, etc.) near the border, and at the request of the U.S. command, they complied, trusting Washington’s promise that it would protect them from a

further Turkish assault. Trump's tweet broke that promise, leaving Kurds exposed to the invasion by Turkish-backed forces, most it seems jihadis and criminals. For years, Turkey has been helping tens of thousands of jihadis to flood into Syria for its anti-Assad war and to establish a Turkish presence. No surprises in how the extended Turkish assault has been carried out.

Former prosecutor and U.N. investigator Carla del Ponte said Erdoğan should be investigated and indicted for war crimes. What about Trump? After all, isn't he the one who gave Erdogan the green light to launch an invasion into the Kurdish semi-autonomous region in Syria?

Turkey had already invaded and occupied Kurdish-controlled regions of northern Syria, killing hundreds and displacing hundreds of thousands, with [credible charges of serious war crimes](#). Trump's green light was for extending the operation with [the] alleged goal of ending a terrorist threat, in reality in order to put an end to the highly promising social and political achievements in Kurdish-led Rojava by violence and terror, ethnic cleansing, and resettling the region with Syrians of Turkey's choosing.

On war crimes, it is well to remember the stirring words of Justice Robert Jackson, chief U.S. prosecutor at the Nuremberg Tribunal where Nazi war criminals were judged and hanged: "We must never forget that the record on which we judge these defendants today is the record on which history will judge us tomorrow. To pass these defendants a poisoned chalice is to put it to our own lips as well. We must summon such detachment and intellectual integrity to our task that this Trial will commend itself to posterity as fulfilling humanity's aspirations to do justice."

When we ask how these words have been heeded since, we know how history should judge us, and what to expect of punishment for war crimes — even in perfectly clear cases of aggression with no credible pretext, the "supreme international crime" of the Nuremberg judgment: the U.S.-U.K. invasion of Iraq in 2003, to take a textbook example.

Continuing with the Nuremberg judgment, we might recall that "to initiate a war of aggression," such as the invasion of Iraq, "is not only an international crime; it is the supreme international crime differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole." Included in the

accumulated evil of the whole is the recruitment of such militants as Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who joined the resistance to the invasion and, after an education in Abu Ghraib, went on to lead the criminal enterprise ISIS, finally killed in a U.S. special forces operation on October 27.

Moving to the domestic front, are the Democrats likely to benefit from impeaching Trump, or will the gamble to do so prove to be a costly one for them?

My own guess is that it will turn out to be rather like the Mueller investigation. Trump will be impeached by the House, then acquitted in the Senate, where few Republicans are likely to be principled enough to face Trump's adoring and militant voting bloc. Then Trump can declare victory for the Tribune of the People, [saying he] has once again protected "real" red-blooded Americans from the machinations of the Deep State and the treacherous liberal elites.

Economic models predict that if nothing changes with regard to the direction of the economy, Trump will win in 2020 with an even bigger margin. Is this a surprising development, given all the chaos that surrounds Trump's presidency?

These models are largely based on public perceptions of current economic trends. These take no account of the fact that the Trump economy carries onward the slow Obama recovery from the Great Recession, now with [a real unemployment rate of over 7 percent](#) with almost stagnant real wages and declining benefits — and spectacular enrichment of a tiny sector to the point where over 20 percent of the country's wealth is in the hands of 0.1 percent of the population while [half the population has negative net worth](#).

In the past, these models have been accurate, though we should recall that the best predictor of electability, dramatically for Congress, is campaign spending, as Thomas Ferguson has shown, again in current work. But we are not in normal times. The Republican "radical insurgency," as it was called several years ago by Thomas Mann and Norman Ornstein of the American Enterprise Institute, has gone far off the traditional rails under Trump, undermining democracy and posing an extraordinary threat to the persistence of organized human life on earth — in the all-too-near future. How such factors will enter into the election is not easy to say, though it is unfortunately not difficult to predict the consequences of four more years of Trumpism.

C.J. Polychroniou is a political economist/political scientist who has taught and worked in universities and research centers in Europe and the United States. His main research interests are in European economic integration, globalization, the political economy of the United States and the deconstruction of neoliberalism's politico-economic project. He is a regular contributor to *Truthout* as well as a member of *Truthout's* Public Intellectual Project. He has published several books and his articles have appeared in a variety of journals, magazines, newspapers and popular news websites. Many of his publications have been translated into several foreign languages, including Croatian, French, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish and Turkish. He is the author of [*Optimism Over Despair: Noam Chomsky On Capitalism, Empire, and Social Change*](#), an anthology of interviews with Chomsky originally published at *Truthout* and collected by Haymarket Books.

J. Wijsman ~ Cariben in beeld - Een beeldonderzoek naar de Nederlandse Caribische eilanden vanuit Nederlands perspectief, 1634-1915

De Nederlandse Cariben zijn als Nederlandse kolonie minder aanwezig in het nationale erfgoed dan de andere voormalige kolonies, Nederlands-Indië en Suriname. De Nederlandse blik wordt gevormd door beeldmateriaal uit Nederlandse collecties en archieven te analyseren. Het onderzoek in deze thesis is gedaan met uitsluitend visuele bronnen als primair bronmateriaal, wat voor het Nederlands Caribisch gebied niet eerder is gedaan. Deze thesis maakt deel uit van het overkoepelende onderzoek *Traveling Caribbean Heritage*. Middels een onderzoeksmethode gebaseerd op discourse analysis, waarbij het beeldmateriaal gelijk staat aan het discourse, is het beeldmateriaal onderzocht. De kunst van het kijken, een belangrijke onderzoeksmethode door Patricia Mohammed, staat

centraal. Deze methode vergt het lezen van een afbeelding, zowel kwalitatief als kwantitatief, om deze vervolgens te vertalen van het visuele naar het verbale. Verder wordt gebruik gemaakt van een vergelijkingsmethode, voornamelijk tussen verschillende beeldtechnieken door de eeuwen heen. Hoe worden de Nederlandse Caribische eilanden tussen 1634-1915 weergegeven in Nederlandse visuele erfgoedcollecties, wat is gedurende deze tijd veranderd in het beeld dat gevormd is vanuit deze collecties en hoe heeft de ontwikkeling van visuele media invloed gehad op deze verandering in representatie?

In het kaartmateriaal is duidelijk alleen dat wat van koloniaal belang was voor Nederland afgebeeld. De eilanden behoorden tot het bezit van het Nederlandse rijk en waren van economisch belang binnen de slavenhandel, maar de inheemse bevolking en verschillende culturen van de eilanden waren niet zodanig van belang dat ze in beeld werden gebracht. Uit het getekende beeldmateriaal blijkt dat de Nederlandse blik op de eilanden gepaard ging met veel onbegrip en weinig kennis over het (of de) onbekende. De achttiende-eeuwse koloniale mentaliteit van othering komt naar voren, waarbij de andere mensen, andere omgeving en andere cultuur als inferieur worden beschouwd. Het gebrek aan kennis nam enigszins af door de komst van de fotografie, maar de mentaliteit van superioriteit bleef lang hangen. Wel kwam er meer variëteit in de taferelen die werden afgebeeld, dus het beeld dat vanuit Nederland werd gevormd van de Cariben werd veelal diverser. De negentiende eeuw bood een gevarieerdere en gemodereerde Nederlandse blik op de Nederlandse Caribische eilanden door de toename in ontwikkelde beeldtechnieken. De slavernij komt gedurende de drie onderzochte eeuwen niet prominent in beeld.

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Complete thesis: <https://thesis.eur.nl/pub/47370>

Stolpersteine Guide ~ Familie Bermann



Karl Bermann (geboren 26.10. 1855 in Konken, gest. "etwa 1930 zu Mannheim"), verh. mit Berta geb. Herz (geboren 26.11.1857 in Ruchheim), lebte in Konken, wo er ein Handelsgeschäft betrieb. Die Eheleute bauten 1905/06 in damals bester Lage der Stadt Kusel das Anwesen Gartenstraße 8 mit Stall und Nebengebäude. Sie zogen 1906 nach Kusel. Karl und Berta Bermann hatten fünf Kinder:

Isidor geboren 21.4.1883 in Konken, meldete sich nach dem Militärdienst am 12.11. 1919 in Kusel polizeilich zur Adresse seiner Eltern. Er verzog dann nach Kaiserslautern (gest. 1935). Seine Witwe Betty lebte im November 1938 in Ludwigshafen. Zu ihr flüchtete nach dem Pogrom die Schwägerin Mathilde Heymann.

Die beiden Töchter Lore und Susi von Isidor und Betty Bermann überlebten den Holocaust in einem Kloster in Frankreich. Ihr Onkel Rudi Bermann traf sich mit ihnen im August 1945 in einer Kirche in Paris.

Mathilde Heymann geborene Bermann, geboren am 6.5.1884 in Konken, meldete sich 1912, aus Trier zuziehend, ebenfalls in das Haus Gartenstraße 8 wo sie, alleinstehend, die Dachgeschosswohnung bewohnte. Nach dem Pogrom floh sie nach Ludwigshafen zu der Witwe ihres Bruders Isidor Borg. Sie wohnten zuletzt in der Prinzegentenstraße 26, als beide am 22.10.1940 in das Lager Gurs verschleppt wurden. 1942 wurde Mathilde Heymann in das Vernichtungslager Auschwitz transportiert, sie ist dort verschollen. Luitpold, geboren 26.4.1891 in Konken wurde als Kriegsteilnehmer in Verdun schwer verwundet und verlor ein Auge. Er wohnte mit seiner Familie ebenfalls im Haus Gartenstraße 8, wo er mit seinem Bruder Ernst das Handelsgeschäft betrieb. Unter dem Druck des Antisemitismus resignierte Luitpold und emigrierte am 18.6. 1937 in die USA zusammen mit seiner Ehefrau Erna geb. Lehmann (geboren 5.4.1897), mit Sohn

Kurt (geboren 17.6.1923) und mit Tochter Ilse (geboren 1.5.1925).

Paula Bermann, verh. Van Es, geboren 9.3.1895 in Konken. Paula war mit den deutschen Truppen im ersten Weltkrieg (1914 - 1918) als Krankenschwester in Frankreich, heiratete den Holländer Conrad Van Es und zog am 17.7.1918 nach Amsterdam. Die Eheleute hatten drei Kinder: Hans, Inge und Sonja. Während der Deportation durch die Nazis sieht Paula ihren Mann im KZ Bergen-Belsen sterben. Sie öffnete sich am 21.1.1945 die Pulsadern, da sie nicht durch deutsche Hände sterben wollte. Tochter Inge überlebte im KZ Bergen-Belsen, Tochter Sonja in einem Arbeitslager und Sohn Hans versteckt bei einer christlichen Familie.

Ernst geboren 23.3.1888 in Konken, wohnte nach Kriegsteilnahme auch im Haus Gartenstraße 8, wo er mit dem Bruder Luitpold das gutgehende und angesehene Pferde- und Viehgeschäft betrieb. Ernst Bermann war verheiratet mit Clara geb. Maier (geboren 30.9.1895 in Malsch). Sie hatten miteinander drei Kinder: Gerda (geboren 18.5.21) Rudolf (geboren 10.7.1922) und Hildegard (geboren 6.1.1927). Die Kinder wurden „deutsch-patriotisch“ erzogen.

Ernst Bermann war zunächst der Meinung, das deutsche Volk lasse die Nazis nicht gewähren und ihm könne als Weltkriegsteilnehmer ohnehin nichts geschehen. Das war ein tragischer Irrtum. Nach dem Verbot des Besuchs der höheren Töchterschule für Tochter Gerda und des Progymnasiums für Sohn Rudolf 1936 schickten die Eltern die beiden Kinder in eine Handelsschule nach Frankfurt bzw. Sohn Rudolf in eine Bäckerlehre nach Heilbronn. Mit Hilfe eines Schwagers des Bruders Luitpold konnten die Bedingungen für eine Einreise in die USA erfüllt werden, so dass beide am 15.6.1938 in die USA emigrierten.

Für die Eltern und die kleine Tochter Hildegard bleiben die Bemühungen um eine Ausreise erfolglos.

In der Nacht zum 10. November 1938 wurde Ernst Bermann mit anderen jüdischen Männern für mehrere Wochen in das KZ Dachau verschleppt. Ehefrau Klara flüchtete mit der Tochter Hildegard nach dem Pogrom zu den Verwandten nach Holland. Nach der Besetzung durch deutsche Truppen wurden Ernst, Klara und Hildegard dort verhaftet und in das Lager Westerborg verschleppt. Ein letztes Lebenszeichen ist eine Postkarte im Besitz von Gerda Lautmann, geb. Bermann. Darauf steht: „Meine Lieben, Päckchen erhalten und herzlichen Dank. Schickt keine mehr. Alles Gute und herzliche Grüße, Ernst und Klara“. Die Familie wurde dann von Westerborg in das KZ Sobibor deportiert. Dort sind die

Eltern verschollen. Tochter Hildegard wurde am 21. 5. 1943 in Sobibor ermordet. Gerda Lautmann, geb. Bermann, besuchte mit ihrem Mann 1971 für wenige Stunden ihre Geburtsstadt Kusel. Beide leben in New York.

Link: <https://stolpersteine-guide.de/biografie/275/familie-bermann>