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European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

By Andrés Gil / Noam Chomsky  
28.09.2022

## Interview with Noam Chomsky

"The only way to know if a political settlement is possible in Ukraine is to try"



**Sources:** The diary

*"The invasion [of Ukraine] itself is a criminal aggression, like the US invasion of Iraq, or Hitler's invasion of Poland," the intellectual says in conversation with elDiario.es: "But, apart from that, it is incredible stupidity. He has put Europe in America's pocket."*

Linguist, philosopher, intellectual, activist. Noam Chomsky was born on the eve of the crash of '29 (East Oak Lane, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA, 1928), at a time when the interwar crisis gave birth to the New Deal in the US, while liberal democracies were entering into crisis in a Europe in which Stalin commanded the USSR, fascism was

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consolidated in Italy, Nazism gained positions after the Munich Putsch and Franco's dictatorship was just around the corner as a prelude to World War II.

In that complex world in which the artistic avant-garde proliferated and the US and Europe digested differently the great crisis of the 20s and 30s, Chomsky began to write political essays in school. He has lived through the Second World War, the Cold War and the war conflicts in half the world where the powers struggled to gain areas of influence avoiding mutual destruction: Latin America, Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan ...

The thinker, who has participated in a dialogue at the [Festival of the tenth anniversary of elDiario.es](#) which was held last weekend in Valencia, questions since the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine the response that the US, the EU and NATO are giving.

**Today is September 24. It is 7 months since Russian President Vladimir Putin decided to invade Ukraine, and we are experiencing an escalation. There is talk of mobilizing reservists, nuclear threats and calls for consultations in Donbas... What do you think can happen? How can you get out of this situation?**

The mobilization in Russia will not affect the immediate conflict. In any case, its effect will be delayed until many months later. But the real problem is that unless we act quickly to end the conflict, there will be extreme dangers not only to Ukraine, but to the world at large.

The conflict in Ukraine is going to continue to kill a large number of people, it will mean great destruction. American, British and Ukrainian military analysts still express surprise that the Russians did not invade in the way they expected.

There are many ways in which war can escalate, with the not inconsiderable threat of nuclear weapons, which could amount to terminal nuclear war.

Meanwhile, large numbers of people are starving to death due to the disruption of the food and fertilizer supply. Efforts to address the global warming crisis have been reversed with the production of fossil fuels. All of that is suicidal.

All of that goes back to the fact that we must be looking for a political settlement. There's a lot of popular support for that in the south of the planet, it's overwhelming. Even in Europe, in Germany, according to recent polls, more than three-quarters of the population wants to move on to negotiations now.

But the major powers, Britain and the United States, are not moving to accept it. And they have to. We must act quickly to try to resolve the conflict before it gets even worse and before the consequences get completely out of control.

**You have said that there are many ways to escalate the conflict, but what is the way to solve the conflict?**

There have always been possibilities to resolve the conflict without it erupting. French President Emmanuel Macron a couple of days ago on American television pointed out once again that before the invasion, until days before the invasion, there would have been ways to stop it by simply moving to implement the Minsk Agreements.

Last April, there were apparently negotiations between Russia and Ukraine, which seemed to be having some positive signs, but were aborted. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson flew to Ukraine and apparently informed the government that the West, namely the United States and Britain, did not want negotiations now.

He was followed by US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, who repeated the official US position that the war should continue to severely weaken Russia, which means that there are no negotiations.

There's only one way to find out, and that's by trying. If you don't try. You don't know. It is possible that after Russia's severe military defeats, Putin will be ready for a deal, more or less in line with what Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky proposed last March: that Ukraine not be a member of NATO, security guarantees and perhaps the possibility of an internationally supervised referendum in conflict areas. It is not unimaginable. But there's no way to know until you try. So the question is, do we try? Do we pay attention to the opinion of more than three-quarters of the German population? Or do we ignore it and say we want the war to continue? That is the choice we have in front of us.

**This week, the HIGH REPRESENTATIVE of the EU, Josep Borrell, has said at the UN that people around the world are tired of the war and that he wants it to end soon – energy prices, problems with food supplies, rising interest rates, inflation ... – but he has also said that Russia has to be defeated first. How long can people endure this situation?**

How long can people endure this situation? I don't know. But the most immediate question is: do they have to endure this situation? Is it necessary? Do we have to do the experiment? Do we have to do the experiment to see if maybe Russia won't use the weapons it has? Do we have to take that risk or the risk that people will have to suffer in Europe? Or can we move to see if the conflict can be resolved? There are opportunities. We don't know how real they are. The only way to find out is to try. And we didn't try. Then we come to your question and much worse questions. Well, that's the choice we have. But how long can people endure it? Who knows? No one knows.

**These months have strengthened NATO, Ukraine is closer to the EU seven months ago Do you think this war is Putin's worst mistake?**

Exactly. The invasion itself is a criminal aggression, like the US-UK invasion of Iraq, as Hitler's invasion of Poland. They are a supreme international crime. But, other than that, it's incredible stupidity. He gave Washington his most precious gift: he put Europe in America's pocket and subordinated it to Washington. Europe will suffer from this. It is a tremendous gift to the United States, supposedly Russia's main enemy.

NATO is the basis for US control over Europe, that is the so-called Atlanticist vision: Europe subordinated to the United States within the framework of NATO. But now Putin has handed it over to the United States on a silver platter. From the Russian point of view, it is the worst possible outcome, apart from the criminal aggression itself and all the consequences that flow from it. All this, again, is one more reason to try to act quickly, to try to put an end to all these horrors. Can we do it? Nobody knows. And we won't know until we try.

**UN investigators have accused Russia on Friday of committing war crimes in Ukraine.**

That depends. The United States also commits massive human rights violations. The invasion of Iraq led to huge human rights violations. No one is calling for sanctions. No one is proposing to ban American tourists from entering Europe. President Biden can stand up at the United Nations and accuse Russia of the crime of violating the UN charter, of course, but the US is the biggest violator of the UN charter, it has been involved in the war against Iraq and in many other cases. Will Russia's reputation be affected? It depends on those who are watching. Do they take rape seriously or ignore it?

**A few weeks ago, the president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, said in the European Parliament that this war is a battle between democracy and autocracy.**

The struggle between democracy and autocracy... Which country in the world has fought most effectively against democracy? Overthrow the parliamentary regime in Guatemala, in Brazil, in Argentina, in Chile? And go on and on to the present. Who are America's main allies? Saudi Arabia, wonderful democracy. Israel, the only country in the world that is in flagrant violation of international law, including annexing occupied territories in violation of Security Council resolutions. Or Egypt, a country under the worst dictatorship in its history. How can he even say those words without looking in the mirror? Just take a look at the world around us. The ability to say words like that would have amazed George Orwell.

**He talks about problems with democracy. In Europe we have Hungary, Poland. The Swedish far right is moving closer to power. This Sunday Giorgia Meloni can become prime minister of Italy What is happening?**

You can look at the United States, the most important and powerful country in world history. Let's go back to Budapest a couple of weeks ago, there was a conference of far-right parties in Europe, many with neo-fascist and neo-Nazi origins. Who was at the conference? America's Conservative Political Action Conference, the Republican Party, is likely to take over Congress in a couple of weeks. The keynote speaker there was Donald Trump, who praised Viktor Orban for leading the way to illiberal democracies, as they are called, crushing freedom of the press, freedom of universities, promoting a proto-fascist, racist and Christian nationalist agenda.

A couple of weeks after that, there was a meeting in Dallas, Texas. Same groups. The guest speaker, the main speaker, was Viktor Orban. We are talking about something that is globally very serious. What is the root of this? That's a long story. My feeling is that the world's populations have been subject to 40 years of bitter class warfare, misnamed neoliberalism, a major attack on the citizenry of much of the world.

The super respectable Rand Corporation just did a study on the transfer of wealth from the general population to the top 1% over the past 40 years. Approximately \$50 trillion. That's class warfare on a really effective level. Well, the same things have happened in Europe to a significant extent. It has led to anger, resentment, fertile territory for demagogues like Donald Trump.

So, it is said whether the problem is immigrants or blacks, but not the rich corporations and the super-rich who are flooded with such wealth that they don't even know how to manage it. Look at current inflation, a large part of this is due to hugely inflated corporate profits, with which they do not even know what to do. This is class war, let's face it, don't hide with fraudulent talk about markets. It is not that it is a direct class war, it has had a bitter effect, angry people, disillusioned with institutions, looking for a place to escape. Well, it's happened before. I'm old enough to remember when it happened in the 1930s in Italy, for example.

**Talk about the 30s. In the 20s and 30s the traditional parties had a responsibility to pave the way for the far right. Do you think that's happening now?**

Of course. Again, let me talk about the United States. Democrats have offered no resistance to this. They accepted it in the 1970s. The Democratic Party abandoned any commitment it had to the working class and the poor, and they became a party of wealthy professionals, the kind of people who show up at former President Obama's fancy parties. They abandoned the general population, helped lay the groundwork for the rise of the proto-fascist far right. The same things have happened in Europe.

**I would like to remind you of an unforgettable phrase of his that he said many years ago during an interview with the BBC: "I'm not saying you self-censor. I'm sure you believe everything you say, but what I'm saying is that if you thought something**

**different, you wouldn't be sitting where you are today." Do you still think the same about mainstream media and this problem?**

It depends, it depends on which side you are on. The propaganda systems of the Western system are sophisticated. In fact, they allow, even encourage, debate and discussion, which gives the impression that all parts of the States are available. If you look closely, you find that that debate and discussion is within a narrow framework of assumptions. There are excluded limits in the United States. In Europe you can see some criticism sometimes in the media: it is very rare in the United States to express views like mine. What I'm telling you I probably couldn't express in any major U.S. media, on U.S. television.

The first thing I do in the morning is read the New York Times, which has a lot of important information. But when it comes to discussion and debate, there are limits. And, in fact, the liberal media are harder at setting those limits, they are the gatekeepers, like the BBC.

**Another phrase he has said in the past: "To change the world, you first have to change the media." However, we have seen many revolutionary and social change processes in the past with the mainstream media and the establishment against it.**

I wouldn't say the first thing is change in the media. The media will change hand in hand with popular actions. The fact is that the media is much better than it was because the activism of the 60s civilized and changed the country. Then he joined the institutions. Things that were said 40 or 50 years ago would now be inconceivable.

Source: [https://www.eldiario.es/internacional/noam-chomsky-unica-forma-si-existe-posibilidad-solucion-politica-ucrania-intentarlo\\_1\\_9564094.html](https://www.eldiario.es/internacional/noam-chomsky-unica-forma-si-existe-posibilidad-solucion-politica-ucrania-intentarlo_1_9564094.html)

**Rebellion 27.09.2022**