

Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel and the Palestinians

Noam Chomsky (1999)

Updated edition

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First published in 1983, *Fateful Triangle* is a comprehensive indictment of what Noam Chomsky calls the "disgraceful and extremely dangerous" policy the United States has enacted towards Israel, particularly with regard to Israel's actions with regard to the Palestinians. Supporters of Israel must wilfully overlook or deny that nation's long history of human rights violations and military aggression, Chomsky writes, and they will continue to do so as long as Israel is strategically useful towards "the US aim of eliminating possible threats, largely indigenous, to American domination of the Middle East region". In the course of elaborating his argument, Chomsky cuts through the myths and distortions that appear in mainstream media accounts; the damning facts that he so systematically assembles portray a government more brutally and overtly racist, perhaps, than even apartheid-era South Africa. Three new chapters, drawing upon material from *Z* magazine and other publications, incorporate such developments as the Palestinian uprising, Israel's war on Lebanon, and the ongoing "peace process". --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

Review

'The most ambitious book ever attempted on the conflict between Zionism and the Palestinians ... a great and important book.' Edward Said, *London Review of Books*

'A major, timely and devastating analysis of one of the great tragedies.' Fred Halliday, *Tribune*

'Brilliant and unscrupulous.' *Observer*

Foreword by Edward W. Said

Fateful Triangle may be the most ambitious book ever attempted on the conflict between Zionism and the Palestinians viewed as centrally involving the United States. It is a dogged expose of human corruption, greed, and intellectual dishonesty. It is also a great and important book, which must be read by anyone concerned with public affairs.

The facts are there to be recognized for Chomsky, although no one else has ever recognized them so systematically. His mainly Israeli and VS. sources are staggeringly complete, and he is capable of registering contradictions, distinctions, and lapses which occur between them.

There is something profoundly moving about a mind of such noble ideals repeatedly stirred on behalf of human suffering and injustice. One thinks here of Voltaire, of Benda, or Russell, although more than any one of them, Chomsky commands what he calls "reality"—facts—over a breath-taking range. *Fateful Triangle* can be read as a protracted war between fact and a series of myths — Israeli democracy, Israeli purity of arms, the benign occupation, no racism against Arabs in Israel, Palestinian terrorism, peace for Galilee. Having rehearsed the "official" narrative, he then blows it away with vast amounts of counter-evidence.

Chomsky's major claim is that Israel and the United States — especially the latter — are rejectionists opposed to peace, whereas the Arabs, including the PLO, have for years been trying to accommodate themselves to the reality of Israel. Chomsky supports his case by comparing the history of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict — so profoundly inhuman, cynical, and deliberately cruel to the Palestinian people — with its systematically rewritten record as kept by those whom Chomsky calls 'the supporters of Israel.' It is Chomsky's contention that the liberal intelligentsia (Irving Howe, Arthur Goldberg, Alan Dershowitz, Michael Walzer, Amos Oz, Jane Fonda, Tom Hayden, Shlomo Avineri, Martin Peretz) and even segments of the organized Left are more culpable, more given to lying, than conservatives are.

Nor is Chomsky especially gentle to the PLO, whose "self-destructiveness" and "suicidal character" he criticizes. The Arab regimes, he says, are not "decent," and, he might have added, not popular either.

In the new edition, Chomsky includes invaluable material on the Oslo and Wye accords — an unnecessary line of Arab capitulation by which Israel has achieved all of its tactical and strategic objectives at the expense of every proclaimed principle of Arab and Palestinian nationalism and struggle. For the first time in the twentieth century, an anti-colonial liberation movement has not only discarded its own considerable achievements but has made an agreement to cooperate with a military occupation before that occupation has ended.

Witnessing such a sorry state of affairs is by no means a monotonous, monochromatic activity. It involves what Foucault once called "a relentless erudition," scouring alternative sources, exhuming buried documents, reviving forgotten (or abandoned) histories. It involves a sense of the dramatic and of the insurgent, making a great deal of one's rare opportunities to speak. There is something profoundly unsettling about an intellectual such as Chomsky who has neither an office to protect nor territory to consolidate and guard. There is no dodging the inescapable reality that such representations by intellectuals will neither make them friends in high places nor win them official honors. It is a lonely condition, yes, but it is always a better one than a gregarious tolerance for the way things are.

Edward W. Said
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