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Archetypes, Polarities and Paradoxes in Noam Chomsky's Pirates and Emperors

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Global Pluralism – Summer 2004
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Noam Chomsky's book Pirates and Emperors, Old and New: International Terrorism in the Real World begins with a story of a pirate captured by Alexander the Great, who asks him "how he dares to molest the sea." "How dare you molest the whole world?" the pirate replied: "Because I do with a little ship only, I am called a thief; you, doing it with a great navy, are called an Emperor. Chomsky frames his book around the polarity of emperors vs. pirates.

This paper discusses four fixes that fail that were presented in the book and their corresponding polarities. The fixes we chose to discuss are:

- Possession is nine tenths of the law
- Import Democracy- the more Democracy the more freedom- the more freedom the less communism- the less communism the more democracy.
- United Nations
- "The Enemy of my Enemy is not my Friend"

Following a description of the fixes that fail, the underlying paradoxes are presented. In addition, a suggestion for a 2nd order paradigm shift is offered to secure a more sustainable future for humanity.

Fix that Fails: Possession is nine tenths of the law

Originally, the saying "Possession is nine tenths of the law" was meant to indicate the power an owner had to use, sell, or give his own property as he saw fit. Over time this saying has become a way to view the world and the politics within. Think of the person who builds a shed on his neighbor's property, if the landowner does not act to reclaim the land than over time it will legally become the property of the neighbor. "Possession is nine tenths of the law" has been the excuse used when settlers came to America, if indigenous people were not using land

100% of the time by living on it or farming it, then it was open to take.

Although, the US government does not articulate the nine-tenths argument as one of the base assumptions in their actions around the world, it is plain that it is embedded in the American psyche. Now, the saying's meaning has expanded even further and can be attributed to both property and power. This belief has allowed the United States to control countries, cloning them into powerless reflections of the US. Simply said: "Might makes right". The US perceives a greater need for the space, resources or power of others and takes accordingly thereby solving its problems. Yet such action creates new problems- whose burdens initially fall to others yet eventually affects the United States as well.

The message "might makes right" cloaks the acts of a bully in the respectability of the law. Taking rather than sharing can only lead to creating more enemies. On a local level, it means losing a neighbor while on a global level it may mean creating countries of enemies. While the United States is powerful country this may seem insignificant, but what will happen when the cycles of power change? How will the US be treated then? As a country, when the US takes items it "needs" others are typically deprived of necessities such as food, safety, and liberty. Ross Day, Director of Legal Affairs for Oregonians in Action refers to a saying by the second President of the United States, John Adams who said,

"Property is surely a right of mankind as real as liberty...the moment that the idea is admitted into society that property is not as sacred as the laws of god, and that there is not a force of law and public justice to protect it, anarchy and tyranny commence. Property must be sacred or liberty cannot exist." (<http://www.oia.org/possession.htm>)

Under the portrait painted by John Adams, the United States is now a national tyrant and no longer living by its own historical principals.

Polarity: Monoculture vs. Multiculturalism

Monoculture vs. multiculturalism is a polarity within the “Possession is nine tenths of the law” fix that fails. This polarity provides many excuses for the acts of a bully. “They are not like us, they don’t deserve ...” An example of this can be seen in the treatment of Native Americans in the United States with the policies of settlers seeing Natives as less and taking what they wanted supported by government policies of termination and assimilation. Alexis de Tocqueville stated eloquently that Americans were able to take everything from Native people and yet not lose face in the eyes of the world. He said, “It is impossible to destroy people with more respect for the laws of humanity.” (Chomsky, 2002, p. 148)

A similar example can be seen in the conflict between Palestine and Israel. This case is one where both believe that their culture is more true and real than the other’s culture and each claim to their homeland is more important than the other’s claim. “Yoram Peri ruefully observed that three-quarters of a million young Israelis have learned from military service “that the task of the army is not only to defend the state in the battlefield against a foreign army, but demolish the rights of innocent people just because they are Araboushim living in territories that God promised to us.” (Chomsky, 2002, p. 9)

A multicultural view, although still able to be twisted by clever people, in its essence requires an acceptance of difference, connection, and similarity between people. Would these dilemma’s both nationally an internationally, looking at the Native American struggles within the US and the Palestinian-Israeli international struggle exist within a multicultural paradigm? The perceived need of the United States to gain control within the Middle East has led to action supporting Israel financially and militarily. This had led to unintended consequence of greater Palestinian and Arab revolt against Israel, creating a vicious cycle requiring greater US support

of Israel. World opinion intercedes and pushes for a peace that would lessen US control in the Middle East

Fix that Fails: Import Democracy- the more Democracy the more freedom- the more freedom the less communism- the less communism the more democracy.

The Reagan administration operated in Central America- Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador under the pretense of democracy when in reality the administration was operating under an imperialistic control to eradicate communism in those Central American countries. This was during the massive arms build-up of the Cold War Strategy 'Peace Under Strength'.

During the Reagan Administration, there was a heightened awareness of Communist countries and those rebel movements associated with Communist regimes. The Reagan Administration presented the Cold War Strategy to the world under the philosophy of 'Peace Under Strength'. To rid the world of Communism, the United States would carry out covert operations throughout Central America to eradicate potential communist uprisings.

The Contras, "contrarevolucionarios" or "counter revolutionaries" were the opponents of Nicaragua's revolutionary and democratically elected Sandinista government. The Sandinistas ousted Anastasio Somoza Debayle in 1979 to replace the Somoza family's 43-year rule.

A key role in the development of the Contra alliance was played by the United States following Ronald Reagan's assumption of the presidency in January 1981. Reagan accused the Sandinistas of importing Cuban-style communism and aiding leftist guerrillas in El Salvador. According to the Reagan Administration, Reagan signed the top secret National Security Decision Directive 17 (NSDD-17), giving the Central Intelligence Agency the authority to recruit and support the Contras with \$19 million in military aid.

(<http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/index.html>) The effort to support the Contras was one component of the so-called Reagan Doctrine, championed by American conservatives, who

called for providing U.S. military support to movements opposing Soviet-supported, communist regimes.

The Iran-Contra Affair, under which US President Reagan's administration secretly sold arms to Iran and diverted the proceeds to Contra rebels fighting to overthrow the leftist and democratically-elected Sandinista government of Nicaragua. Meanwhile Iran was engaged in a bloody war with its neighbor Iraq from 1980 to 1988. The sales had a dual goal: appeasing Iran, which had influence with militant groups who were both holding American hostages in Lebanon and supporting bombings in Western European countries; and funding an anti-Communist guerrilla war in Nicaragua. Both actions were contrary to acts of Congress, which prohibited the sale of weapons to Iran, as well as in violation of UN sanctions.

In 1984 Nicaragua filed a suit in the World Court against the United States in *Nicaragua v. United States*, which in 1986 resulted in a guilty verdict against the US, calling on it to "cease and to refrain" from the unlawful use of force against Nicaragua through direct attack by US forces and through training, funding and support of the terrorist forces. The US was "in breach of its obligation under customary international law not to use force against another state" and was ordered to pay reparations. "The US dismissed the court ruling with contempt, on the official grounds that other nations do not agree with us so we must decide for ourselves what lies within our "domestic jurisdiction"; in this case, a terrorist war against Nicaragua." (Chomsky, 2002, p. 3).

Polarity: Democracy vs. Communism

The greater the Democracy the less the Communism. The United States enforced and supported the Contras to eradicate what the US called a Cuban- style communism in Nicaragua. With training facilities in nearby Honduras, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) headquartered

a strategy to overtake the Sandinistas and regain democratic control.

The newly elected Sandinistas implemented a wide range of ideologies that reflected revolutionary Marxism to Liberation Theology. The political platform initiated by the Sandinistas included but was not limited to:

- Nationalization of property owned by the Somozas and their collaborators.
- Land reform.
- Improved rural and urban working conditions.
- Free unionization for all workers, both urban and rural.
- Control of living costs, especially basic necessities (food, clothing, and medicine).
- Improved public services, housing conditions, education (mandatory, free through high school; schools available to the whole national population; national literacy campaign).
- Nationalization and protection of natural resources, including mines.
- Abolition of torture, political assassination and the death penalty.
- Protection of democratic liberties (freedom of expression, political organization and association, and religion; return of political exiles).
- Equality for women.
- Pesticide controls
- Rain forest conservation
- Wildlife conservation
- Alternative energy programs

The CIA as an operative communist state misconstrued this platform. At the time, Democracy represented freedom and the Reagan Administration would not tolerate such an opportunity in what they considered a communist country. The Contras were considered terrorists by the Sandinistas and many Nicaraguans, and many of their attacks targeted civilians. There is evidence that Reagan's US administration incited the targeting of "soft" or civilian

targets by Contra militants, such as farm co-operatives.

“Nicaragua and other insolent countries still act as if unaware that history has been ordered not to budge, under the pain of total destruction of the world. “We will not tolerate...” warns President Ragan....President Reagan says Saint Luke

(14:31) advises military funding to confront the Communist hordes. The economy is militarized; weapons shoot money to buy weapons to shoot money. They manufacture arms, hamburgers, and fear. There is no better business than the sale of fear. The president announces, jubilantly, the militarization of stars. (Galleano, 1988, p. 272)

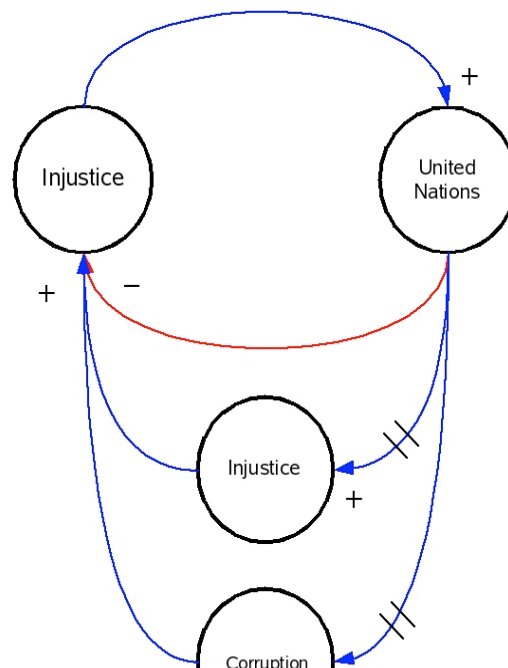
Democracy is freedom?

Fix that Fails: United Nations

Another polarity identified within Chomsky’s text is the on-going interdependence between the powerful and the powerless. A failed effort to end the struggle between powerful and powerless is the United Nations. Through an examination of the paradoxes that have arisen from the United Nations, one can consider a shift in pretensions– a chance to explore the possibility of securing a different future for humanity.

A careful look at the dynamics within the United Nations reveals many paradoxes. In many ways, the UN has stated the world needs to abide by general assembly resolutions, except for the United States there is no consequence for failure to abide. The actions of the United States frequently fail to coincide with the messages preached by US politicians and the US ambassadors to the United Nations. Chomsky illustrates some of the ways the US has failed to

United Nations



comply with UN resolutions in his book. For example, “The United Nations ...General Assembly voted 94 to 3 calling US to comply with the world court ruling ordering cessation of the US attack against Nicaragua.” (Chomsky, 2002, p. 106).

Figure 1 – United Nations

The base psyche of the United States is to remain powerful. This is the driving force behind the failure of the United Nations. The United Nations views the management of the powerful vs. powerless from a mechanistic paradigm. Ambassadors focus on single issues and problem solving. This leads to greater bureaucracy, corruption and injustice. The powerful become powerless, revealing the paradox within the powerful vs. powerless paradigm.

Fixes that Fail– “The Enemy of my Enemy is not my Friend”

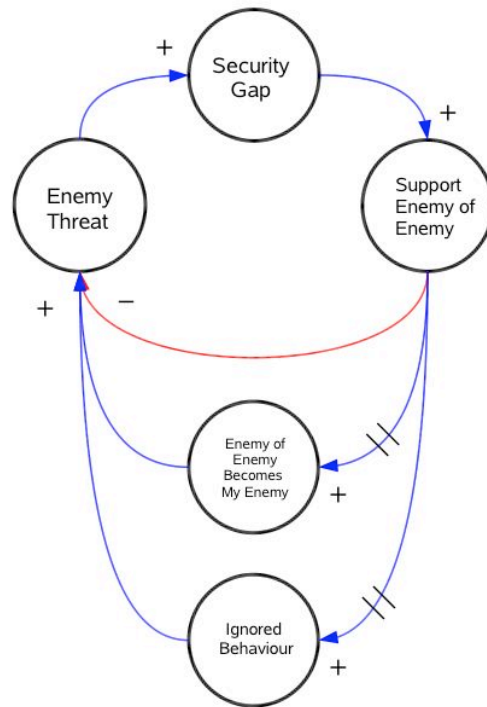
There is a cliché that turns out to be a basic premise of international relations. This is the notion that the enemy of my enemy is my friend. Adherence to this premise results in a system dynamic that is a textbook example of a fix that fails. One can call this expression of the archetype “The Enemy of my Enemy is not my Friend.” The common perception from the frame used by adherents is that If one supports the enemy of one's enemy, then the defeat of one's enemy will occur that much quicker. The initial state is that there is an enemy. The perceived gap in a sense of security due to the presence of the enemy leads one to the action of supporting the enemy of the enemy. The common perception is that this will decrease the impact of the enemy. Since the impact of the enemy is reduced, the perceived threat to sense of security also decreases.

What the common belief misses is that there is a delayed unintended consequence that the 3rd party is now supplied, trained and has intimate knowledge of the primary actor's strengths and weaknesses. In an attempt to ignore the evidence of the growing threat of the 3rd party, the

unintended consequences are also that the primary actor is turning a blind eye to dangerous or unethical behavior of the 3rd party allies which in turn helps motivate opposition to the primary actor. By attempting to defeat the primary enemy, the primary actor is instead supporting and perpetuating the existence of otherwise unfriendly forces, and continuing the provenance of those forces and increasing the motivation of the primary enemy to resist.

The US initially supported many of the enemies it now fights. As a single example, the US supported the fighters in Afghanistan in an attempt to resist the Russian occupation. Put into motion the forces that developed into the Taliban, but the development of the Jihad as a holy war. Original support for the development of the Jihad as a fight against the Russian occupation developed the modern conception that was later turned against the US. The Washington Post, on March 23, 2002, states, “the United States spent millions of dollars to supply Afghan schoolchildren with textbooks filled with violent images and militant Islamic teachings, part of covert attempts to spur resistance to the Soviet occupation.” (Stephens & Ottaway) The article continues that there were unintended consequences to this policy, namely that this has “steeped a generation in violence.” (ibid.) These unintended consequences create more problems in the long-term than the short-term solutions address.

Figure 2 – The Enemy of my Enemy is my Friend



Polarity - “Self-Interest and Public Interest”

The polarity between self-interest and public interest creates a false dichotomy between the self and the community. To be sure, there are cases where self-interests conflict with those of a community or the systemic environment of the community, but

the false dichotomy is that the interests of the systemic environment or my community cannot be beneficial to myself. There is a difference between what I want and what I need. On one level of interpretation, there is a certain ethical egoism which is a claim that what is ethical is what the self demands. Another level of interpretation sees the relationship between self and community as an essential matrix of both balancing and reinforcing loops.

Polarity - “Us versus Them”

By viewing the world within the context of a polarized delineation between those that support particular agendas and those that oppose them, it becomes impossible to signify that there are those that might not fit within these opposites. For example, viewing the enemy of my enemy as my friend ignores the fact that the enemy of my enemies may also oppose me. The polarity between my enemy and myself does not signify that there can be a complicated web of conflict.

Polarity - "Pirates versus Emperors"

The polarization of actors in an event also leads to projection of all. Berg and Smith point out that sub-groups of the larger group can become the containers for those qualities that the larger group is unable to recognize in itself. This is a function of scapegoating. However, there's a more sinister function of not only hypocrisy but ad hominem involved in the claim that similar acts are good or evil because of the agent's relative goodness or badness. This is especially true with there is a singular lack of self-criticism in the claim.

Underlying Paradoxes

In this book, the author presents the audience with the many paradoxes of the US foreign policy, their direct actions and of their allies, and how reality is defined by the powerful as the story of the pirate and emperor showed us. One of the most obvious paradox is the one formed by the polarity of "Act of War" vs. "Act of Terror." Benjamin Netanyahu, then Ambassador of Israel, defined terrorism as "deliberate and systemic murder and maiming [of civilians] designed to inspire fear." (Chomsky, 2002, p. 42) Although a clear definition for the act of war was not be found in the book, one must assume that "just cause" and "eye for an eye" are fairly accurate definitions. The definition of terrorism seems to apply only to the nations and/or networks that are not considered allies of the Empire (USA). The actions of the Empire and its allies were (and still are) defined as retaliation or preemptive strike, depending on the context of the actions, even though their actions could be categorized by the pre-mentioned definition of terrorism and there cannot be any distinction between war and terrorism. There within lies the paradox; act of war is an act of terror.

The underlying force is the dualistic perspective that we have of the world: right and wrong, good and evil, us and them. We have strong tendency to make a clear distinction and

create opposing definitions to serve those purposes. Distinctions and polarities have helped in our search for a truth but they have also been manipulated for the purposes of self-interest. The distinctions that many of us hold so dear are repeatedly manipulated in order to disguise the self-interest of the powerful few from the general public. Through centuries and empires, the powerful have used their cloud to create an illusion of reality that benefits their motives and hides their true intentions, empires of the present are no different.

The ways of the emperor are the ways of the world. Outside of the empire, nations and networks need to comply with the ways of emperor or face threat of being invaded under various pretexts, such as freedom, democracy, war on terror; or have their elected government overthrown by militia supported by the empire. The empire will defend its rights, its ways, at all cost and for those purposes; it outspends the next 15 nations. (Chomsky, 2002, p. 157) Defying the empire comes at a great cost.

An illusion of reality has been created within the walls of the empire, an illusion of freedom where everyone could say what they will, as long as their thoughts are in the right place. Gradually and systematically, the powerful few have taken over all the media and all means of communicating information. The ways of the empire are perceived as the ways of the righteous and supreme, the stuff that dreams are made of. It is perceived in the way that the powerful portray it.

Few question the perceived reality but many fear to do so. It is the unthinkable. Many have invested so much in the ways of Empire that they are terrified of questioning reality because they fear that it might crumble like a house of cards.

Reality is an illusion created by one's own belief systems, each individual system influencing another's. We need to be aware of those belief systems and it is our duty to question

them. We need not question if they are right or wrong, good or bad, but to question their true intentions and abandon our dualistic belief system. Distinctions are just distinctions, helping us making sense of reality and should not govern our way of thinking. We need to move from the illusion that reality is as we perceive it to the idea that reality is an illusion.

Suggestions for 2nd Order Change

In order to move towards a more sustainable future, we need to be more open to changes and diversity. We need to question all of our actions. The following suggestions incorporate action for change.

1) *Recognize that short-term solutions are merely stop-gaps*

Short-term solutions are the tools in the activist's long-term toolbox. The tools are not the point of the activism, and amelioration of the symptoms of deep social conflicts is not an ultimate goal. However, short-term solutions address immediate issues and make it possible for parties in conflict to come together and address long-term issues.

2) *Anticipate delays that mask unintended consequences*

The essential nature of the archetype is that the unintended consequences generally are delayed. This creates a situation where those consequences can be unintentionally or willfully missed. By keeping aware that delay effects undermine long-term goals it may be possible to better address fundamental causes of conflict.

3) *Address the root conflict instead of trying to win it*

One possible way to encourage 2nd order change is to focus on existential sources for the nodes in the archetype. For example, why is the enemy an enemy? Why are the enemies in conflict? What are the authentic needs of the people in this conflict and is it possible to address

those fundamental issues without perpetuating the conflict itself?

4) *Focus on long-term solutions*

By maintaining a focus on the long-term, one can keep in focus the ultimate goal.

Whether specific short-term actions perfectly align with the long-term goal is not as important as an eventual design goal. One good way to develop this kind of focus is to create a statement of the design goal. For example, Atlee states his design goal as an inquiry question, “What would intelligence look like if we took wholeness, interconnectedness and co-creativity seriously?” (Atlee, 2003, p. 4) McDonough's design goal is to ask “[h]ow can we love the children of all species ... for all time.” (McDonough & Braungart, 2002, p. 189)

5) *Move from debate to Dialogue*

The use of 'debate' is to mean any style of conflict resolution which is intended to create a win for some and a loss for others. 'Dialogue' is to mean any style of conflict resolution which is intended to create a new answer from the possibilities presented by conflict, fundamentally one step beyond a win-win to a new solution that collapses the conflict into collaboration.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Chomsky offered a multitude of fixes that failed. The book is filled with paradoxes that contributed to our expanding understanding of global pluralism. The world continues to get smaller and smaller through the expansion of information and transportation systems. We are all connected. All our actions count.

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