BOOK REVIEW

Masters of Mankind
Noam Chomsky

Reviewed by John Barnes
Penguin Books, 2015
(Available at Asia Books)

Noam Chomsky is regarded by many the worlds' leading political writer and social critic. The current slim volume under review is a collection of his lectures from 1969-2013. Each chapter is typically 10-20 pages in length.

Chomsky sees the world very differently to many, because he takes a skeptical perspective. Chomsky accepts nothing at face value and checks sources expressing alternative points of view.

With the current (January 2017) furor about *false news*, blatant political bias by the mainstream media in reporting progress and outcomes with the US political presidential elections Chomsky's writing and lectures will have renewed resonance with many people.

We ought not to be surprised at the clear link between politics and the mainstream media. When we cast our minds back just two years to the Berlusconi scandals in Italy and The Rupert Murdoch scandals in the UK many people it would seem have short memories. Berlusconi owned much of the print and TV media in Italy. In the Murdoch controls of much of the print, Radio and TV media in UK, Australia and USA.

Collectively we failed to remember these cases, when just two year later, history repeated itself in USA. And still these media moguls are permitted to retain oligopolistic control of the media.

Chomsky's book covers a foreword by Markus Raskin is a prominent US social critic, political activist and philosopher. The body of this book comprises seven short chapters and concludes with extensive Notes and Index sections.

The bulk of the contents comprise:

Chapter 1 Knowledge and Power; Intellectuals and The Welfare Warfare State;
This chapter covers economic and political subjugation by the US. Of which one interesting example close to home that is discussed is the Philippines.

Chapter 2 An Exception To The Rules; This chapter largely focuses on what acts are legitimate in the conduct of war. And focuses on work by Michael Walzer a prominent political theorist and intellectual. Ongoing carnage in Syria and neighboring countries make this chapter particularly relevant.

Chapter 3 The Devine License To Kill; This chapter deals with Reinhold Niebuhr's philosophy which many politicians follow to this day such as " Everybody understands the obvious meaning of the world struggle in which we are engaged, We are defending freedom

against tyranny and are trying to preserve justice" against the depredations of the Evil Empire. It was obvious then, as it is now, that reality was not quite that simple.
Chapter 4 Consent Without Consent; Reflections on The Theory and Practice of Democracy; The phrase "consent without consent", was coined by US sociologist Franklin Henry Giddings when the US was liberating The Philippines at the turn of the last century. Currently the US electoral system is based on voluntary voting and traditionally voter turnout has been less than 50%. The result to date has been election of a candidate who has less than 50% of the eligible vote so the phrase seems appropriate.

Chapter 5. Simple Truths, Hard Problems: Some Thoughts on Terror, Justice and Self Defense. This chapter revisits the imprisonment of alien non-combatants, their torture and the trampling of International law by several of the world's political leaders over the past 30 years.

Chapter 6 Human Intelligence and The Environment; A key element of this chapter is a phrase by US biologist Ernst Mayer that "human intelligence is a lethal form of mutation." This is especially relevant now that so little is being done to save the planet from mankind's impact on global warming but when vast amounts of resources are squandered on less crucial matters.

Chapter 7 Can Civilization Survive Really Existing Capitalism. In this chapter Chomsky clarifies the US form of capitalism to other types of capitalism found elsewhere on our planet and again it ties in with the previous chapter on the environment.

The book concludes with 15 pages of Notes arranged in a chapter by chapter format and an Index arranged alphabetically.