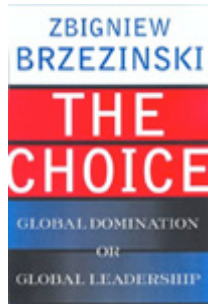




## The Choice: Global Domination or Global Leadership

Zbigniew Brzezinski , Joanne J. Myers

March 25, 2004



The Choice: Global  
Domination or Global  
Leadership

- [Introduction](#)
- [Remarks](#)
- [Questions and Answers](#)

### Introduction

**JOANNE MYERS:** I'm Joanne Myers, Director of Merrill House Programs, and on behalf of the Carnegie Council I'd like to thank you all for joining us as we welcome Zbigniew Brzezinski to our Books for Breakfast program this morning. He will be discussing his book [The Choice: Global Domination or Global Leadership](#).

Since his earliest days as a political scientist, Zbigniew Brzezinski has intuitively understood the need for America to be the architect of its own destiny. Towards that end he believes that America, because of its unique standing in the world, should be at work building a global community of shared interests.

Several administrations have come and gone since Professor Brzezinski served as National Security Adviser under President Jimmy Carter. Nevertheless, many of his ideas from that time now seem more relevant, more prescient, and more urgent than ever before.

Today, as we all know, there is an ongoing debate about what America's role in the world should be and how we should go about attaining our goal. In *The Choice*, Professor Brzezinski articulates his vision for the strategic challenges that America faces now and in the future.

Although *The Choice* could be read simply as a timely and provocative commentary on the Bush Administration's efforts in the realm of foreign policy, it would be an error for you to do so, as Brzezinski's concerns and formula for the future go much deeper. I believe the proposals set forth will be viewed as one of the more important works on which to construct a reasonable foreign policy for generations to come.

Over the years Professor Brzezinski has taught us that speaking out about what one truly believes in, even while others are given to reciting platitudes, confers its own mantle of moral and political authority. So when he challenges us to consider the role we wish to play in the world and asks Americans whether we wish to choose between dominating the world or leading it, we should listen carefully to his wise counsel.

Professor Brzezinski, we are honored by your presence here this morning. We look forward to listening to your ideas and benefiting from your experience so that we too will have all the information we need to make the right choice this year and in the years to come.

Please join me in giving a very warm welcome to our guest, Zbigniew Brzezinski.

### Remarks

**ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI:** Good morning.

As a point of departure, I would like to share two grave concerns that I entertain regarding America's contemporary role in the world. The first is that we are running the risk of basing our foreign policy writ large on a fundamental misdiagnosis, demagogically proclaimed, of the defining challenge of our time at this juncture in history. And secondly, that in that context the U.S. could become dangerously bogged

down in a huge geo-strategic quicksand. The cumulative effect of both of these risks could be profoundly dangerous to American security, challenge American global leadership, and contribute to greater international chaos.

The first of these two dangers, the misdiagnosis, is already producing a crisis of credibility regarding America's word and America's definition of the world. It is also producing increasing American isolation, probably more extensive isolation than ever before. This is measurable in public opinion polls or in UN votes, where not infrequently these days the United States finds itself voting alone with just three other states—Israel, Micronesia, and the Marshall Islands—a fact gently underplayed in the American press.

The second danger, engagement in a huge geo-strategic quicksand, could threaten our power and our ability to use that power for national security purposes.

The misdiagnosis pertains to a relatively vague, excessively abstract, highly emotional, semi-theological definition of the chief menace that we face today in the world, and the consequent slighting of what I view as the unprecedented global challenge arising out of the unique phenomenon of a truly massive global political awakening of mankind. We live in an age in which mankind writ large is becoming politically conscious and politically activated to an unprecedented degree, and it is this condition which is producing a great deal of international turmoil.

But we are not focusing on that. We are focusing specifically on one word, which is being elevated into a specter, defined as an entity, presented as somehow unified but unrelated to any specific event or place—and that word is terrorism. The global challenge today on the basis of which we tend to operate politically is the definition of terrorism with a global reach as the principal challenge of our time.

I don't deny that terrorism is a reality, a threat to us, an ugly menace and a vicious manifestation. But it is a symptom of something larger and more complicated, related to the global turmoil that takes place in many parts of the world and manifests itself in different ways.

That turmoil is the product of the political awakening, the fact that today vast masses of the world are not politically neutered, as they have been throughout history. They have political consciousness. It may be undefined, it may point in different directions, it may be primitive, it may be intolerant, it may be hateful, but it is a form of political activism.

And it is a product of things we all know. Literacy makes for a higher level of political awareness, TV makes for proximity and for an immediate awareness of enormous disparities in the human condition, the Internet makes for instant communications, and all of that creates an unprecedented sense of intimacy, but also friction.

Much of this is also spurred by America's impact on the world. We are a society that by its very existence and its ability to project itself outward is able to transform the world. We have an unsettling impact, because we are economically intrusive, culturally seductive. It creates envy, resentment, aspirations, hostility.

Much of it is also fueled by globalization, which the United States propounds, favors and projects by virtue of being a globally outward-thrusting society. But that also contributes to instability, and is beginning to create something altogether new: namely, some new ideological or doctrinal challenge which might fill the void created by the disappearance of communism.

Communism was the mobilizing doctrine of the 20th century. At one point it had enormous appeal. It led the Russian people into seventy years of misadventure, with devastating consequences for themselves. It was an illusion—a deceptive illusion, but captivating.

But it is now totally discredited, and we have a pragmatic vacuum in the world today regarding doctrines. But I see the beginnings, in writings and stirrings, of the making of a doctrine which combines anti-Americanism with anti-globalization, and the two could become a powerful force in a world that is very unequal and turbulent.

We must recognize that terrorism is not an entity, but a technique of conflict favored by the weak. It is spurred and spawned by objective and subjective historical and political conditions in specific and diverse parts of the world. If wedded eventually to weapons of mass destruction, it can have devastating consequences.

It is in this context that our national security must be redefined. We as a people have been accustomed to the notion that national security is the norm. Henceforth national *insecurity* will be the norm for America, and that is an enduring reality. There is no returning to the era of a sovereign, separate national security for us.

Global security, therefore, has to be our objective, and global security means a recognition of the seamless web of expanding interdependence in the world, which it is in the American national security interest not to undermine, but to institutionalize. Therefore, there is a connection between global security and our security, and we are now part of the world, in that we share an insecurity which has been so customary in the lives of almost all other nations, unlike ourselves.

I fear that current American policy, by focusing almost exclusively on terror, will increase the probability that global hatred for the United States will intensify—we see evidence of that, tragically, since 9/11—and sporadic terrorist attacks on the U.S. may become a more frequent reality.

One of the points in the March 16 *New York Times* article entitled “A Leaner, Meaner Jihad,” was that many more disparate groups have become active in an anti-American jihad since our operation in Iraq. This phenomenon gives us pause.

We may be facing wider global turmoil and more anti-American coalitions in a setting of percolating instability. We will not be able to deal with this situation if we respond to it simply by focusing on terrorism alone, use catchy, abstract, but ultimately meaningless, slogans about “evil,” and if we refer to terrorism as a single entity.

The President, speaking on the anniversary of the war in Iraq, said: “the world is divided into two visions about the value of life,” “there is no neutral ground between civilization and terror,” “there can be no separate peace with the terrorist enemy.”

Remove the word “terrorist” from those phrases and substitute “Nazism” or “Stalinism” and they make a great deal of sense, because we are then dealing with an enemy that was cohesive, coherent, visible. Here he is speaking about elusive, unreachable, difficult-to-define, unspecific groupings, but he categorizes them as a single entity.

If we fail to ask ourselves specifically who are the terrorists and where they come from, we will not begin to understand how to fight them effectively by military means in order to extirpate them, and by political means in order to undercut them. It isn’t enough simply to say to the country that the defining difference between us and them is “we love things, they hate things,” a phrase which somewhat mystifies me, but which nonetheless is designed to mobilize public emotions.

Without recognizing the complexity inherent in the global political awakening of 4 billion people hitherto passive, and without addressing the specificity of the phenomenon of terrorism, we will neither be able to engage it nor to uproot it.

The Vice President recently said that the hatred of terrorism “is not directed at any one government or nation or religion, but it is against all governments, nations, and people.”

If you look at what has been happening in Ulster, it is not addressed at the Norwegians or the Finns, but as a specific target: the British Government, with London as very frequently their favorite object. If you look at Kashmir, it isn’t Argentina that is involved, but India and Pakistan. If you look at Palestine, it is not the whole world, but specifically the Palestinians and the Israelis.

If you fail to identify the source of the violence and its particular historical and social setting, you are addressing terrorism in a fashion not very different from condemning lung cancer without ever mentioning smoking or tobacco. We have to know the symptoms, the pathology, and the roots of the problem. Only by addressing all of them can we not only extirpate the terrorists by force, but also undercut their base by political means.

I am troubled by the fact that in the two years since 9/11 we haven’t heard a single thoughtful analysis at the highest level of the phenomenon that we confront, of the danger we must face, specifically of the enemy whom we have to defeat by force and by politics. We live in a complex world in which that is very much needed.

It is related to my second proposition, which is that not being able to diagnose correctly runs the risk of maximizing our difficulties in dealing with the specific geo-strategic challenges that we now confront, the most obvious of which is our involvement in a huge part of the world from the Suez to Xinjiang, from the southern frontiers of Russia to the shores of Pakistan on the Indian Ocean. I call this area the "global Balkans" because it is like the Balkans of Europe—driven by conflicts within, creating a suction effect for external powers to come in—and we have come in, and we don't have much choice.

But we are now involved in an area of 550 million people who are religiously inflamed, ethically conflicted, densely populated, demographically explosive, massively poor; but rich in energy and, therefore, control over the area has enormous strategic implications for future influence on Europe and the Far East. We are and will be engaged in that area for at least a decade, and if we don't handle it well, we could become absorbed to a degree that it begins to undermine our power.

We must deal with four interlocking problems in this area, each enormously complex and difficult, each containing great potential for violence:

- The stability and future of Afghanistan and Pakistan, because these two problems are now interlocked. Think of the scale of that problem alone in terms of the challenge that it may create for us in money, men and blood.
- The problem of adjoining Iran, with its aspirations, which has an impact and influence on Afghanistan.
- Our presence in Iraq, from which it will take time to extract ourselves, which is affected by Iran.
- And finally, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which destabilizes the Middle East and mobilizes Arab hostility towards us, and which is interconnected with the problem in Iraq where there is no disengagement. If the Israeli-Palestinian peace process is not moving forward because it would disengage, the subsequent Iraqi government, even if democratic, will be anti-American and anti-Israeli, and therefore even more legitimate in its attitude than the previous one that we overthrew.

We will have to address all four of these problems if any single one of them is to be resolved.

We cannot do it entirely on our own. We need others with us, in particular the Europeans. They are close, they are well off, they have historical interests, their security is also affected, they have views on this subject, they have men and money.

But they are not hired hands. If we want them there, we have to treat them as allies. We have to engage them, support efforts at their unification, and we have to understand that the Europeans also have views and interests which we must take into account if they are to be involved.

There are several implications of the points I have discussed this morning.

The first is that we cannot prevail in this time of complexity without having serious allies—not just "coalitions of the willing", which tend to be expedient and opportunistic, but alliances based on conviction, shared values, as well as convenience—and the Europeans are the obvious partners.

But we will not have the Europeans as allies on a critical issue so close to them if we continue to hold the Manichean view "if you are not with us, you are against us," which has been the most frequently cited slogan in the course of the last year. "If you don't follow what I say, you are my enemy" is hardly a prescription for generating a strategic dialogue with Europeans about "where are we at this juncture of history?"

We are not infallible. Neither are they. We may have a more activist vision than they, their views may be too accommodating, but if we want to act jointly we have to fashion a joint perspective. We can only do so by a serious dialogue with Europeans, and not by name calling or trying to divide them into good guys and bad guys on the basis of who is newer and who is older. That will simply contribute to continued division and absence of support.

We also cannot prevail in the present context if we are leading by misleading. To be a democratic leader at home and abroad, one must be trusted. Unfortunately, the Iraq issue has created a real crisis of credibility. And credibility, whether in private life, in business or in academia, is based on an enduring sense of trust.

Why hasn't the Administration attempted to find out who fabricated documents on uranium in Niger? If I had been misled, I would like to know who has been misleading me, and why. And yet, there is a curious disinterest in asking: "Who did this, and why?"

We have said, "The British gave us those documents." The British are now washing their hands and saying, "We didn't really produce them. We got them from the Italians." Let's go to the Italians then, let's twist their arms and ask, "Why did you produce them? And if you didn't produce them, who gave them to you?"

There are other similar issues. There has been testimony that we have been misled by foreign services. What foreign services? How did they mislead us? What did they tell us?

We need to ask these questions to restore trust. President Kennedy instructed [former Secretary of State] Dean Acheson to talk to De Gaulle in the middle of the [Cuban missile crisis](#) and say to him, "America is going to go to war against the Soviet Union, and therefore all of NATO will go to war, and there will be nuclear war unless it removes nuclear missiles from Cuba." When he had finished, he said to De Gaulle, "And now I want to show you the evidence." De Gaulle looked at him and said, "I don't want to see your evidence. The word of the President of the United States is good enough for me. Tell him France stands with the United States."

Suppose tomorrow we send an emissary somewhere and say, "Iran has nuclear weapons and is poised to attack Israel or Europe." Would that be the answer of any rational foreign statesman? I suspect that they would quietly say, "Show us the evidence, and leave it with us so we can carefully examine it."

That is a major cost in terms of leadership.

We cannot prevail if we are not careful about how we generalize about the enemy. If we want Europe with us and if we don't want the world of Islam against us, we have to address the problems of the Middle East. We cannot maintain a hands-off posture, which results in the deaths of more Palestinians and Israelis.

Our position has been to wait and simply watch, or occasionally to utter pious noises when violence occurs. We gradate these noises: some acts of violence we condemn explicitly without any qualification; others we say are "excessive but in some measure perhaps justified"; and yet others meet with, "we are deeply concerned." And the violence continues and that ambiguity persists.

Today no Israeli and no Palestinian knows what peace might mean and how to define it. Because they cannot define it, their extremists can, and we know what their definitions are: a larger [Haaretz](#) Israel full of settlements, with the Palestinians in [Bantustans](#) here or there, on the one side; and the extremists on the other saying "no Israel."

I have been in the Arab world many times. I have heard some Arab leaders say to me when I was pushing them for more action towards peace: "We're in no rush. The Crusaders were in Jerusalem for ninety years, and look where they are now—they're gone. So what is the rush?"

The parties cannot move towards peace. Sharon is no better than Arafat. Arafat is no better than Sharon. Both sides are locked into a relationship of hostility in which the roadmap alone is a path to nowhere, in which there is an enormous incentive on each to trip up the other in the process. And hence, the roadmap becomes a series of maneuvers designed by each to discredit the other, unless it is wedded to some clearer definition of the eventual outcome—and that's where the United States and Europe can play a more active role.

The [Geneva Accords](#) are a vision of peace which has been negotiated by a group of Israelis and Palestinians. The document outlines a peace that is more or less reasonable and enduring, with significant security precautions. A clearer identification of that objective is something that the Americans and the Europeans could jointly promote, thereby undercutting some of the support for terrorism.

If we don't do that, it is almost inevitable that we will become globally what Israel has become regionally, a hated garrison state. Because we will get terrorist acts here now—not like the World Trade Center, which was an unusual coincidence of ability and luck, but individual suicide attacks in the United States, which will affect the quality of life. We will become an extension of the Middle Eastern conflict.

And hence, we have a vital interest in doing something with the Europeans. We owe it to the Israelis, we owe it to the Palestinians, because both peoples would welcome a peace but right now neither can generate a serious movement towards peace. A joint American-European approach would help to move the parties, because they would at least recognize the option to this endless and increasingly bloody conflict.

But we also cannot prevail if we remain blind. One of the aspects of the Iraq crisis is that we know now how weak our intelligence is. One dollar spent on intelligence is a greater contribution to our safety than ten dollars spent on Homeland Security, because we cannot protect everything, but if we know more we can preempt. But to preempt, if we pursue a doctrine of preemption, we have to know what we are doing, we have to have an intelligence that is effective.

Right now we have a doctrine of preemption, based on suspicion, and that is not good enough in the nuclear age of considerable global turmoil. It's a prescription for international instability. Unless we begin to tackle the problem of intelligence seriously, we will remain semi-blind.

The Administration says, "We have all been misled," and then, "But we have very good intelligence, and we don't fire anybody; therefore we don't do anything." The intelligence wasn't clear-cut about what they did or didn't have, but if the Director of Intelligence and some of his associates were fired, they would probably spill the beans. This kind of accommodation preserves the status quo.

We need a shakeup of the intelligence community, better human intelligence and an independent Director of Central Intelligence, like the head of the FBI: fixed term, but not a presidential appointment.

And finally, we can prevail only if our foreign policy returns to a bipartisan, centrist orientation. This is the first time since the onset of the Cold War that we have a foreign policy of one extreme. Neither the extreme left nor the extreme right can provide the basis for a sustained American foreign policy that mobilizes support elsewhere.

I hope these elections will lead to a serious discussion about foreign policy, and contribute eventually to greater moderation. I would hope that the next President would make a foreign policy appointment that symbolizes and personalizes a return to bipartisanship.

It would be absolutely terrific if Kerry, if he were to win, was to appoint the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Lugar, as his Secretary of State. Think of the message this would send. Or if he wants to be more daring, Hagel.

Bush would feel quite at home with Senator Lieberman, a centrist Democrat who supported him on Iraq, as his Secretary of State. Or perhaps even someone like Biden.

We will not be able to use our power intelligently, nor to inspire confidence, either on the basis of extreme leftism, which abjures power, or extreme right wing, which revels in power. We need to think seriously about this because of our position in the world, because ultimately at stake is not only our leadership but what the absence of that leadership can do in a world dominated by turmoil.

**JOANNE MYERS:** You make it all seem so obvious. I have to say *dzie,kuje* to you.

I would like to open the floor to questions.

### Questions and Answers

**QUESTION:** It is an enormous relief to hear such a lucid exposition of the problems in the world from somebody with your authority and experience.

I would just propose two small amendments: "Suez to Xinjiang" is not wide enough if we consider the events in Casablanca last year and who are the main suspects in the Madrid bombings. To preserve your alliteration, I suggest "Xinjiang to the Sahara," or maybe "Turkistan to Tangier."

My other amendment would be that the roadmap be allied to a long-term vision of what peace in the Middle East should look like, defined in Security Council resolutions, including the one passed in 2002, that says "there should be two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace within their own frontiers." The question is: are the parties able or willing to proceed along that road, and is the international community doing enough to hold them to their ostensible commitments?

You have laid out a wonderful policy prescription to your fellow Americans. You have repeatedly referred to their need for allies and for a global approach. What is your advice to people like myself, a European working in an international organization, or indeed the governments and spokespeople of those allies?

A year ago, we saw a number of them standing up to the United States in the Security Council. They are terrified, or at least intimidated, by the results of what happened then. And since then, observing them in the Security Council and elsewhere, we see that nobody wants to pick a fight with the Administration elected by the people of the most powerful country in the world.

But how in that case would you advise the would-be allies and partners of the United States to conduct themselves in dealing with an Administration that has the policies and the misdiagnoses that you have described?

**ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI:** First, let me deal with the two preliminary points.

I like the alternative alliteration, "Sahara to Xinjiang," but it doesn't really do justice to the point I am making, because I am talking specifically about the United States having plunged headlong into an area from the Suez to Xinjiang.

Yes, the Sahara is important, and there has been violence in Morocco and instability in Algeria, but we don't have armies deployed there, we are not spending billions of dollars, we are not engaged in escalating violence which we may find difficult to control. The area where we are in a quicksand is from Suez to Xinjiang.

On the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in the resolutions that you refer to, what does it mean, "two states side by side?" Where are those states? You can have a Palestinian state in three pieces together representing 40 percent of the West Bank and Gaza, and the West Bank and Gaza already are only 22 percent of the original mandate of Palestine. You can have a nonsensical entity divided into three parts which imitates a state but isn't a state. Or you can have a state made up of 20-22 percent roughly of the old state, which will have 5 million people, living next door to a state which possesses close to 80 percent of the land and having 6 million people.

Which of the two is more viable? The Geneva Accords addressed that in some detail, and they provide many provisions for dealing with the difficult issues which have to be addressed far beyond the Resolution. And that is where specificity is needed, because until people understand the specific nature of the deal, they have no particular incentive to be committed to peace and a great deal of reason to mistrust, fear and hate each other.

On the larger issue, there is a problem in defining a strategic dialogue with our friends, and particularly Europeans, in that the Europeans are still at a stage in which they have to speak with a number of voices. But that should not preclude the possibility of a strategic dialogue, nor the fashioning of an approach that is jointly undertaken. It is in our interest to get the Europeans to participate more with money and men in Afghanistan, in Iraq, but also in helping us on the Israeli-Palestinian front.

The Europeans, instead of simply criticizing and attacking us, would do better if they were willing to say that they will be actively engaged, more than they are already, in these issues, if at the same time the United States is willing to participate in the pursuit of certain objectives.

We are doing the right things, but always too late in Iraq, including the gradual movement towards sovereignty, into nationalization.

We could do much more in clarifying to the Israelis and the Palestinians the nature of the peace to which we are pointing, because ambiguity is counterproductive. Ambiguity serves the extremists on both sides. The extremists on the Palestinian side want to keep open the option of destroying Israel or doing it piecemeal by the right of return. The Israeli extremists absolutely don't want any specificity in the peace process, which would confront the extremists with the need to give up the settlements and their desire to further expand into the West Bank at least, if not Gaza.

We and the Europeans could make progress if we were willing to be more specific. And it does not even require American pressure on Israel, because once the peace is articulated, it will begin to galvanize both the support of the American Jewish community, which is predominantly liberal but will not stand up and

confront Israel for historical reasons, and to create more support politically in Israel, which will make it easier for the Palestinian moderates to be more assertive.

Right now we are providing an umbrella for continued violence with pious declarations of self-justification for so doing, and that is not a policy.

**QUESTION:** I agree that your analysis is very compelling, and certainly the phrase “the awakening of mankind” is very powerful, because it shows how the world has changed fundamentally.

But you returned to specific narrow prescriptions instead of a universalist, fundamental prescription. You say: “Hey, the world has changed; we have to change fundamentally.”

I also notice that you didn’t suggest that the United States itself as a country overall may have to make fundamental sacrifices or changes to cope with the world that has completely changed. For example, would there need to be domestic changes in policy, changes in education, driving fewer SUVs to avoid energy dependence? Do all these consequences also flow from your description of what happened?

**ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI:** My answer is not flippant, but the reason I don’t do the things that you mentioned is that I am interested in politics and power realities and not in intellectual abstractions.

If you are dealing with a marital conflict and you tell one side “you have to change fundamentally, you have to rebuild yourself from A to Z,” you will not be giving very practical advice on how to deal with it.

We deal with the world as it is and we are as we are. If we are to use our power intelligently and if we are to move in the right direction, we have no choice but do it incrementally. The objective in the long run is there, and the implications of that objective would point to some of these basic changes that you advocate. But if you start by saying, “We’ve got to change the world fundamentally, and to do so, we have to change fundamentally ourselves,” you can close that book on page two, because the rest is no longer relevant to reality, or you can read the book thereafter as an exercise in intellectual fiction.

If the United States is to lead, it can only lead by being what it is, and it can only deal with the world as it is, but incrementally move it in the right directions. The implications of that, however, over time could become what you favor.

For example, dealing with other people in a somewhat different fashion than “if you are not with us, you’re against us” is a step in that direction, because it means you begin to anticipate and take into account the views of others.

I was recently on “The Public Record,” and I had some impact in attacking the democracy initiative for the Middle East. I attacked it on the grounds it was patronizing, it was developed by us viewing the region as a bunch of students and we are going to go and teach them democracy. That’s not the way to do it; we have to engage the people in the region, we have to engage the Europeans also, and then maybe we’ll move towards democracy. But as we move in that direction, we also have to recognize that democracy without political dignity is unreal, and therefore we have to deal with political problems to create a predisposition towards democracy.

One of the reasons why I don’t view myself as an academic entirely is that while I’m interested in ideas, ideas can be an element of power, but to be an element of power they have to be related to power and to reality and not operate on the level of abstraction or utopianism.

**QUESTION:** To follow up on what you just said on Iraq as a democratic state, if it’s a delusion, that’s one thing. But if the process works and in three-to-five years there’s a viable democratic state in Iraq, would that not somehow help the process along in that part of the world, or would it in any way mitigate the turmoil or increase the chaos, or is the whole idea illusional and irrelevant?

**ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI:** Democratizing Iraq is a possibility. If you think of Iraq in a static snapshot as democratic three years from now, which by implication means that it is governed like Norway or Great Britain or Canada, then that is not very realistic, and there is little point in speculating about that.

But democratizing Iraq with some complex internal balance of power is a process that is attainable, but it is a changing process related to the environment. We will not have such an Iraq if the Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues, and I’m not sure you will even have such an Iraq if there is intense antagonism



between the United States and Iran because of the Shiite connection. [Sistani](#) comes from Iran and speaks Iraq Arabic with a strong Farsi accent.

We have to recognize that, because of our large-scale involvement, the problems of the region have become conflated and we will have to be sustained in our efforts to move on several fronts at the same time, and not expect an ideal state, but some progress on all fronts. But to do so, we must be deliberate, focused, very clear about our objectives.

**QUESTION:** You have identified yourself as a realist, and the realistic searchlight you have shone on this stark and complex landscape in the world is enormously interesting and convincing.

But you identified this political awakening, and the defining challenge of our times as how we provide a vision for that newly politically awakened world, particularly in the global Balkans.

Your prescription is not about creating that vision for those politically awakened citizens of the world, but rather forming a global community of shared interests.

If you are talking about creating a new vision which will fill the vacuum, and thereby destroy the roots of terrorism, you must win over hearts and minds. That's exactly how the United States was able to lead so successfully in the second half of the 20th century. Faced with a different global challenge, it provided not only leadership and power but a convincing vision, which too many people thought had worn out after [Francis Fukuyama](#) coined the phrase "the end of history." Can you address how you see the interplay of interest and values?

You talked as if the prescription could be implemented by the transatlantic community, but you yourself said that the great Middle East initiative is too paternalistic. If you want to create that vision, doesn't that mean engagement way beyond the transatlantic community, with China and India on the other end of your global Balkans, and perhaps even with those in the global Balkans? Shouldn't they have ownership of what you're trying to create? Shouldn't engagement go much further than the transatlantic community, which risks being paternalistic and creating something which would be rejected?

**ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI:** We have to differentiate between the global picture and the more specific geo-strategic challenge which I define as being in the global Balkans. That is a geo-strategic challenge in that it's engaging American power right now very directly, and, if mishandled, can blow up in our face in a destructive fashion and undermine our ability to operate.

If you were now in charge of the American armed forces, you'd be very worried about availability of follow-on forces in the event of additional crises. You will have a serious problem with escalating manpower costs in a defense budget which is already monstrous.

And it all pertains to that one area, and that's why one has to talk about those problems as practical geo-strategic problems and why we have to ask ourselves specific questions: What do we do about Afghanistan and Pakistan; how do we try to stabilize it? What kind of changes do we effect? How do we mesh external force with a growing internal capacity for self-rule? How do we isolate the extremists in Pakistan without causing an explosion?—what happens if Musharraf gets killed? We can go through a whole set of questions regarding Iran, Iraq, Israeli-Palestinians.

On the larger scale, there is the problem of how do we move towards a larger community of eventually shared interests of cooperative states. That has much more to do with our policy on globalization, foreign aid, humanitarian assistance.

I focus on these two issues: definition of the problem and geo-strategic response. The other problem is much larger, and will consume us for the rest of our lives and our children's lives. The problems I talk about are more immediate, perhaps the defining problems of the next decade.

Within the geo-strategic area that I define as the challenge, yes we have to have others engaged—the Europeans above all; to some extent the Asians or Japanese can be helpful; the Chinese on some margins, particularly vis-à-vis Pakistan. I don't see the Chinese and others joining us in trying to help to democratize the Middle East; they are not qualified to be particularly instructive in that respect.

But we can certainly do it, and should do it, with Europeans and with the countries in the region, and particularly also with people like the Turks and the Moroccans, and at some point the Iranians. The

Iranians are far more democratic, in spite of the dominant intolerant theocracy, than our mass media conveys to the American people, and probably after Turkey, Iran has the best prospect for political change once the theocracy fades from the scene.

Those are the more immediate, specific problems within the area of geo-strategic concern that we should be addressing more with others.

It should not be done just on the basis of patronizing, from the top down, American-type engagement. It should be done with the parties concerned. This is why the process of peace is so important, because you cannot do it in the context of continued violence in which we are seen as the indirect partner, and by some as the indirect sponsor, of that violence.

**QUESTION:** Your point about focusing on the sources of terrorism as well as its manifestations is well taken, but it also begs the question of what exactly is the proper use of military force. Most of the discussion at the 9/11 hearings are not just when did we know, but why didn't we go in faster, what could we have done if we had known enough.

Against this particular threat, is military force something that you hold in reserve? The current Administration has adopted preemptive force. Where do you stand on the issue of how to use American military power, either in concert with allies or alone?

**ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI:** I have no problem with using American military power if we know what we are using it for and whom we are using it against. The problem of late has been that we aren't very clear about who the enemy is, and we certainly didn't know where the enemy was. This is why intelligence is such an important ingredient in the effective use of military power, unless you're engaging in a conventional war in which two armies collide and you have operational intelligence from the field.

That's not the kind of warfare we're in today. Once you have more effective intelligence, military preemption is fully justified if you know what you're doing, if you know whom you are going after.

But it must be accompanied by a political process which makes certain that the enemy once destroyed is not replenished, and he will not be replenished if you begin to eliminate some of the variety of promptings and roots that caused his appearance. The interconnection between power and intelligence is critical.

As I look at the hearings that are being conducted, I am much less interested in who is responsible and who is pointing a finger at whom. What I am interested in is that it shows how woeful our intelligence has been.

The situation in Iraq remains serious, not because the top leadership lied to the country and to the world, but because they didn't know what they were lying about. If the enemy was armed with weapons of mass destruction, as we were told at the highest level that they were armed with the most destructive weapons mankind has ever devised, then if I were the military commander, I would want to know: "If my enemy is armed with the most destructive weapons mankind has ever devised, please tell me how are these weapons distributed? Do the regiments I face possess weapons of mass destruction, or are they located at the brigade level, or is the command restricted to the division level? What are the principal depots? What are the operating principles under which the enemy operates using weapons? What is their order of battle?"

There is no such thing, except for civilians, as weapons of mass destruction which are somehow *deus ex machina*. You have to train people to use them. These are not simple toys. You must have military doctrine and tactics for their use. Good intelligence would have told us something about these weapons. And if it didn't, that was also saying something.

We know very little. When I was National Security Adviser, I was the principal funnel of intelligence to the President. We knew so much about the Soviets' military capabilities, where they were, their operating doctrines. We knew enough to be fairly confident that if push came to a monstrous shove, we could have done a great deal to make sure that their weapons would not work well.

Why? Because they were competing with us in a realm in which we excel, which is scientific and technological, and our intelligence was heavily focused on technological/scientific means and countermeasures, where we are absolutely fantastic.

When it comes to human intelligence and dealing with permeable countries like Iraq, we are scandalously inadequate. So we listened to Chalabi, who was being paid by some branches of the U.S. government for his evidence that they wanted to hear, and sources of that sort— Saddam Hussein's nephew told someone in interrogation, and his niece was saying the opposite, so we chose whichever one we liked. We knew nothing.

We know very little about the terrorist groups. We cannot do that unless we have an effective clandestine service that is systematically developed over the years, that has operating traditions, that has a certain freedom of action. But if you don't know, what are you going to do, just lash out or simply give blanket support to others who lash out? Where is that going to take you?

And wait until you start getting some nephews of somebody who has been blown up in Iraq or in Palestine as collateral damage blowing themselves up here in shopping arcades. Just think what the reaction will be about the use of power. And then where do we use that power?

**JOANNE MYERS:** You may no longer be a funnel, but you certainly are a window into clear vision of the challenges for the future. Thank you very much for being with us.

Copyright © 2008 Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs