

Zbigniew Brzezinski and Brent Scowcroft *America and the World*
Basic Books 2008

Introduction: David Ignatius

- “Belief that the world is changing in fundamental ways, and that our traditional models for understanding America’s role don’t work very well.” Viii

- They start from national interests but believe in engagement with a changing world.

Brzezinski:

- “Global political awakening”
- Shift of power to the East
- Surfacing of common global problems, loss of American confidence

Scowcroft:

- End of Cold War – “historical discontinuity”, end of concentration on a single power
- “Globalization meant... the politicization of the world’s people.” P.14

Brzezinski:

- Arrogance and self indulgence
- “Our legitimacy and our credibility have been badly damaged.” P.16

Scowcroft:

- “Worried about... an increasing rush to decision.” P.21

Shift from status quo to transforming power

Scowcroft:

- “Globalization is eroding national boundaries every where.” P.27
- “[Globalization is] reducing the ability of the nation state, and so the rise of China or India is not like it would have been one hundred years ago.” P.27

Brzezinski:

- “The global system as it now exists was shaped largely between 1945 and 1950, when there were entirely different power realities. So the first order of business is to adjust the existing global institution to these new realities, which involve the rise of power like China, India, Japan, with Indonesia in the horizon.” P.28
- “The G8 is no longer a functioning institution.” P.31
- “Inherent in the global political awakening... is a general thrust toward intensifying global chaos.” P.32
- “Americans are... paradoxically simultaneously very well-educated and amazingly ignorant.” P.34
- “We are a society that lives within itself. We’re not interested in the history of other countries.” P.34

Ignatius :

- “For... foreign policy... the great challenge of the twenty-first century is to find a way to bring a rising China into the global community of nations in a way that is stabilizing.” P.113

Scowcroft and Brzezinski are optimistic:

- “It requires gradually changing the international system and re-defining the meaning of American preeminence.” P.114
- American attitudes more far sighted than imperial powers in 1914.

U.S. reaching out to China in 1970s and they agreed to oppose Soviet hegemony.

Scowcroft:

- “After World War II, a kind of new world order governed by open systems.” P.115
- “welcoming environment”
- China after 1949 – “ a hermit nation.” Unlike Germany before WWI, China wants to join not overturn international system

Potential ruthless rival danger of competition for resources

Scowcroft:

- Problem “if the United States insists on a formal position of primacy.” P.116 This is a real problem.

Brzezinski:

- “The notion of a ... business rival includes the notion of restraint.” P.116
- We know more about how our leadership operates than how theirs does. “But my own experience in dealing with this leadership is that it is remarkably sophisticated, eager to learn, and quite deliberate in its effect to understand realities.” P.117
- “The Chinese understand both the potential of their power and also the dangers of exceeding its limits.” P.117

David Ignatius : How great is the danger of China breaking up?

Scowcroft:

- “The Chinese leadership is extremely fearful of instability.” P.118
- “I think one of the least likely directions for any instability is outward aggression.” P.119

Specter of “Japan’s Greater East-Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere”

Ignatius :

- “You could argue that the Bush administration’s greatest foreign policy success has been managing to improve relations simultaneously with both China and Japan.” P.131

Contrast of US either one policies in the Middle East with more open ones in the Far East

Scowcroft:

- Unlike some parts of the world, “in Asia” we’re not seen as having normally nationalistic objectives
- “India is becoming an economic powerhouse, but they’re doing it almost in spite of themselves.” P.137

English Marxist Training

Brzezinski:

- “I have no particular sense of anxiety about countries deciding to emulate the Chinese model.” P.137
- “In a lot of countries, the choice is not authoritarianism versus democracy. It is stable development with contrast from the top down versus chaotic freedom that’s economically totally disruptive.” P. 137 (Egypt as an example.)

Scowcroft:

- Very dangerous to push community of democracies

Brzezinski:

- “India’s social disparities are far more acute than China’s.” p.146
- “One of the important roles of the next president will be to educate the American public about the new global realities. ... the public is living in some sort of nirvana. They don’t really understand what’s happening in the world. They don’t know how financial, economic, and political relationships have been shifting.” P.149

Russia Gorbachev underestimated nationalistic sentiments in FSU

Brzezinski:

- Time asymmetry in Russia cutting off energy to war

Scowcroft:

- “America’s goal should be a Russia comfortably at home with its European neighbors.” P.191

Brzezinski:

- “if America and Europe do not consult and act together in some systematic fashion, there will soon be no West.” P.209

Scowcroft:

- “it may not be appropriate to say that power is moving to Asia because the global forces at work are diminishing national power, changing its nature, and diffusing it. Globalization is redefining the nature of global power.” P.220
- “it may be far more important to be able to present a vision that will attract people toward producing a better world.” P.220

Brzezinski:

- “[The Olympics are important] Because there’s a new concept of influence and power in the world.” P.221
- “the first truly global problems of survival.”

Ignatius:

- “Daniel Bell observed... that the nation state is too big for the small problems and too small for the big problems.” P.230

Scowcroft:

- “if we didn’t already have a United Nations, the world as it is right now could not sit down and agree on a useful UN charter.” P.231
- “Not domination and ultimatums but leadership.”

Brzezinski:

- “avoiding stigmatizing others”
- “quest for dignity”
- “We’ve lost our self-confidence.” P.240

Scowcroft:

- “And the optimism to go out and do good. That’s been the symbol of America... Now there’s great doubt around the world whether we mean well.” P.241

Brzezinski:

- “I don’t know whether I’m a realist or an idealist.” P.241

Scowcroft:

- “To me, realism is a recognition of the limits of what can be achieved.” P.243

Ignatius:

- American exceptionalism since we’re special and assigned blared
- Universalize our values