



## **World Affairs Councils of America National Conference**

**“United States and Europe: Partners or Victims?”**

**Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski**

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Mr. Chairman. Ladies and gentlemen. First of all, Mr. Chairman, thank you so much for the very generous, kind introduction. One is always a little bit at a loss for words when one is introduced with such kindness and generosity, even though, of course one wishes to believe every word of it. So I really don't know what else I can say except thank you, but it does occur to me that I might imitate President Carter, who not such a long time ago was introduced at a meeting that I was attending with equal generosity, and he stood up and said, “Thank you for that introduction. Of all of the introductions I have heard, this one was the most recent.”

Let me also say that I am very pleased to be standing here before this audience. I know what you represent. I know what your interests are focused on. You are a bi-partisan group of Americans, or tri-partisan, in that there are many independents among you, deeply interested in foreign affairs. And your interest goes beyond just sound bites on television, or simple slogans. You are interested in understanding what happens in the world, and how America should relate to that which is happening in the world. And that to me is an act of civic responsibility, because America is so important and yet as a democracy it is essential that American foreign policy be based on an intelligent, well-informed, sophisticated electorate that understands the complexities of the world we live in, and doesn't reduce them to simple slogans.

Having said this let me also take issue with you immediately. This conference is entitled, “United States and Europe: Rivals or Partners?” I think it is not a good title. It's not a good title. The fact is that in the foreseeable future -- and the foreseeable future means more or less a decade or two -- Europe is not going to be a real rival to the United States. That is just a fact. To be a real rival to the United States, Europe would have to be a comprehensive global power. Europe already is a massive economic power in the world. It is a rival to the United States in that respect, and it surpasses the U.S. in that respect, but Europe does not have the political unity to have the military might to be a comprehensive global power, and I dare to guess that it will not do so in the next ten to twenty years. It is moving in that direction and that is a very important, indeed, a central historical fact. The emergence of a more unifying Europe is a terribly important

development that is transforming the world and its implications will be felt, but Europe will not be a rival in the foreseeable future.

Assuming no catastrophic discontinuity in the year 2020, the U.S. will still be hegemonic, but I hastily add, not omnipotent. And if we cease to be hegemonic because of some massive unforeseeable calamity, or because of a national cop-out, Europe will not be the replacement. We will be replaced by chaos. We will be replaced by global chaos. And that chaos is in fact more likely to happen if in the meantime America and Europe do not comprehensively cooperate. Hence, the real alternative for us in the future is not rivals or partners. It's to be either partners of sorts, or joint victims. 'Partners or Victims' is the right title if we think about the future in a meaningful fashion.

And this is why in my view the present trans-Atlantic tensions are serious, because they do inhibit our ability to co-operate. And I repeat that America is preponderant but it is not omnipotent, and this is why cooperation is needed. The transatlantic tiff that we now confront and have been confronting is more than just a tiff. I think there is more at work here, a profound alienation between the two sides of the Atlantic Ocean, an alienation that has political significance. We have had disagreements in the past, in the 1950s over NATO and European defense community and later over Suez. We had disagreement with the French in the 1960s about the shape and future of NATO; with the Germans and the issue of Finlandization and related issues in the 1970s; in the 1980s as the Strategic Defense Initiative created fissures between America and Europe. But these were disagreements that were either esoteric politically, applied only to discussion within the political elite, or on the popular level mobilized hostility towards the U.S., largely left of center.

Today, every public opinion poll tells us that there is significant antagonism towards American policies in Europe. Not towards America, but towards American policies. And this is not limited to the left wing. It is comprehensive; it is across the board. It is serious. There are public opinion polls that testify to this that are too numerous to mention but you have seen most of them, the Pew polls particularly. But there's one poll that rung a bell with me, one poll among the many. The question was a very simple one. The question was "Are you disappointed that the Iraqi's didn't offer more resistance?" Now let's think what the question is really asking. Just think what the question is really asking. It is really asking, are you sorry more Americans weren't killed? That's what it's really asking, and I was struck by the percentages that said yes. And that tells you something.

The fact of the matter is that American power worldwide is at its zenith. Our political standing is at its nadir and we have to face this. We have to face this. There are many causes for that. After 9-11 there was an outpour of solidarity for America. Two years have passed and today there's a lot of antagonism towards policies and a profound alienation in the background. I think it has a lot to do with the way we reacted towards 9-11, particularly at the highest official levels. The central essence of that reaction can be reduced to a simple phrase, which is strikingly Manichean, and which has been repeated many times at the highest level. "He who is not with us is against us." You've heard that

phrase because it has been used many times. I ran a computer check on that and was struck by how often it is used: 99 times already by spring of last year. That says something. If you are not with us you are against us.

Do you talk to your friend that way? Do you talk to your relative that way if you have a serious family problem? Do you win friends that way? Do you mobilize support that way? Do you convince anyone you are right that way? And yet that has been the defining essence of our posture. That has deepened the fissures. That has created suspicions.

Of course in the background of this looms the enormous issue of what is the threat that we are confronting today? The response given repeatedly has been that the threat that we all face today is terrorism, and that the response to it is war on terrorism. But notice how that threat is defined? Terrorism, that terrorism is the threat. But terrorism is a tool. It's an ugly, vile, murderous tool, but it's a tool. Terrorism is killing civilians in order to intimidate. You don't wage a war on a tool. You ask yourself, who is the enemy? The answer the war on terrorism focuses on the tool. It doesn't address the question of the essence. To say that the problem we confront is terrorism and to say that the answer is war on terrorism, without in any way defining terrorism in a personal, historical and political context, but only as an abstraction, is like if one were to say we are waging a war against cancer, lung cancer to be precise, without ever mentioning tobacco or smoking.

That's what war on terrorism is unless you are prepared to go beyond the abstraction and ask who is the enemy? If they use terrorism, it's terrorists. Terrorists are the enemy. And who are the terrorists? Where do they come from? What is the historical, political setting that has nurtured them? How do we eliminate them, but also eliminate the conditions that spawn them? That's what we have to do if we are serious about the response, and we have been reluctant to do that.

An obsession is not a strategy. Fear and panic are not worthy of a great power and will not mobilize support except those who are affected by the fear and panic. And that makes for difficulties. That makes it difficult for us to address the fact that we are dealing with terrorists that come specifically from the Middle East and whose hatred for us has been precipitated in modern history largely by the clash between Islamic fundamentalism and American military presence in the area -- particularly in Saudi Arabia whence a lot of the terrorists originate -- and between Arab nationalism and American support for Israel in the conflict with the Palestinians. Those are the conditions that precipitated it. It doesn't justify it. It doesn't mean that the other side is right but that is what has to be focused on if one is serious about dealing with the problem. If we don't deal with that problem in a straightforward fashion and it does not call for capitulation of the terrorist, far from it, it calls for measures that extirpate them and prevent them from being re-born, we will find it more difficult to cope and find it more difficult to mobilize support.

In so far as Europe is concerned we do have in Europe two huge geo-strategic issues that do affect our security and theirs that require a joint response, and both are related either

directly or potentially to the issue of terrorism, but both call for comprehensive and difficult response. The first common issue involves our joint interest in the expansion of Europe. It is in our interest that the zone of peace be expanded, and that means that we have an interest that we share with Europe in that Europe be larger, that Europe expand, that European outreach be influential.

That specifically, geographically means Turkey. Because if Turkey is not in some fashion related to Europe, even if not by immediate membership, Turkey runs the risk of sliding into the Middle Eastern cauldron. And if Turkey is engaged, then of course the issue of the Caucasus arises. And the United States has an interest in the Caucasus and so does Europe. There is the question of Ukraine and the expansion of Euro-Atlantic sphere to Ukraine. For without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be an empire and has no choice but eventually to try to join Europe, but on conditions of democracy and legality that Europe enshrines. But if Ukraine falters and is reabsorbed, then Russia is again an Empire, with all of the insecurities that it generates on the Eastern edges of Europe.

We need a wider NATO. We need to work with Europeans and we're trying. Some Europeans are more responsive, others less. But it is easier to do that if we share a common strategic perception. A larger European Union is also in the American interest and I don't think we should fear that the European Union, by enlarging, will immediately become a homogenous political military entity that will challenge us.

In brief, the first strategic challenge is to proceed together through a process of expansion to create a larger zone of peace beyond which there is an uncertain area that can breed instability. The second largest, even larger geostrategic challenge pertains to what I call, in a book in which you referenced, in the new book, is the new global Balkans. This is that huge area between Suez and Zhang Zhung, which is ravaged by ethnic and religious and social conflicts. Which is unstable and hence originates a great deal of the concrete terrorism that we confront. It involves seamless and interrelated issues. Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan are an obvious set of issues that interact and it's difficult to imagine permanent stability in Afghanistan without some progress being made in Pakistan and stability being made in Pakistan without some normalization and political change with and in Iran. Both Pakistan and Iran impact on Afghanistan.

But that seamless issue interacts with another seamless issue - the relationship between Iran and Iraq and the Middle Eastern peace process. Iran is of importance to Iraq. The Shiite connection creates an interaction. It is difficult to imagine stability in Iraq with continued hostility with Iran, and it is difficult to imagine a successful American disengagement with Iraq that leaves behind in Iraq a friendly government, if the conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians is still ongoing. Then any government in Iraq even the most nicely democratic one, in fact, the more likely democratic one, will be more anti-American and anti-Israeli. Hence, the interrelationship of these issues is a complex but inescapable reality.

To deal with these issues we also need Europe, but we will not get Europe on the basis of commands and instructions, not to mention references, that he who is not with us is

against us. We need to share in a strategic dialogue and we need to discuss what is at stake. The Europeans have the resources, and they also have the historical background. They know the region. They're not less informed than we. We need them. And we also need the United Nations. We are now beginning to talk about the United Nations being involved in the elections. Well, it's now almost February 2004. Soon it will be a year since we entered Iraq. Why does it take so long to recognize that fact? Wouldn't it have been better to start a few months ago? I think so. I think so. We have been reluctant, but have been moving in that direction, but still with considerable hesitation, with some considerable uncertainty, with a great deal of opposition within portions of the administration.

That opposition has now found a new angle, which is articulating increasingly forcefully, namely, that the solutions of the problems in the Middle East only come if there is democracy in the Middle East. Vice President Cheney spoke at Davos this week and put a lot of emphasis on that proposition. He says first of all that terrorism only arises in countries that are not democratic. That might be of some interest to some Europeans who attend Davos, particularly those who come from Italy, Germany, Spain, Great Britain, Ireland, to mention just a few. These countries have had terrorism in our time, a lot more terrorism and more victims than we have suffered. To the best of my knowledge they have been democracies for quite a while. So terrorism does not necessarily spawn in conditions which are not democratic. It is an over simplification and distortion which leads in dangerous directions.

He then goes on to say quite explicitly in that speech that democratic reform is the pre-condition for peace in the Middle East. Democratic reform is a pre-condition for peace in the Middle East. Doesn't that give you some sense of a deadline for when peace will occur? Like maybe, ten, twenty, thirty years from now? Are we going to wait that long? How many more Israelis will die in bombings? How many more Palestinians will be killed as collateral damage if we're going to wait for peace until democracy has prevailed?

While on the subject, if we're serious, suppose there were free elections today, lets say in Saudi Arabia, and the two candidates were Prince Abdullah and Osama bin Laden. Who do you think might win these elections? Suppose there are elections in Egypt. Pitting Mubarak against the Muslim Brotherhood. Who would win those elections? We say we don't like Arafat's leadership, and in the same speech Cheney dismissed a proposal from Shimon Perez for guaranteed borders for two states, saying that he will only deal with Sharon. But we want to get rid of Arafat. But suppose there are elections among the Palestinians, free elections, whom do you think would win? Obviously Arafat.

So, we must be very careful not create a new obstacle to raise the threshold higher for peace, because peace has to be nurtured very deliberately. One must also not forget that a pre-condition for democracy, for political democracy, is political dignity. The Germans became a democracy after War World II after four years of occupation. Germany regained its status and several years later it was already a member of NATO. Japan's occupation ended five years after 1945. The American presence continued but the

occupation ended. The Palestinians have not had political dignity for thirty-seven years. If we're going to wait until they are democratic and the Middle East is democratic we are going to be facing repeated terrorism, and we might as well face that fact and not talk about terrorism as an abstraction, a theological evil, but as a concrete political reality that has to be addressed with concrete political solutions in mind.

This is why America and Europe need a strategic dialogue but not demagogic preaching. We need consensus by agreement and not by dictation. American engagement is absolutely necessary. European passivity is not a solution. We will overcome the gap only if we speak to each other and we treat each other with respect. I think there are indications that more and more Americans are aware of this, and therefore I am not a pessimist. But I take the problems today that we face very seriously, and am very concerned about the absence so far of a comprehensively effective response, even though there is some movement in a more positive direction.

I expect that the world by 2020 will involve a global hierarchy in which the United States will still be at the top. The European Union will probably be next, but precisely because it will not be a comprehensive military political power, it will not match us. Behind us will be Japan or China and India. Look at the revolution of the global structure of power that we'll be experiencing. That revolution itself calls for a responsible comprehensive leadership. Leadership that does not confuse preponderance with omnipotence and it can only come from America.

I was reminded of that by a letter that I received just received a week ago from a person I don't know, a continental European for whom English is not his native tongue, as you will see. And the letter started by rather effusive flattery addressed towards me, which I'll not read to you because it really is extremely flattering. But it made me suspicious and made me think well, it's probably a request for something or other. It simply went on to say that he wanted to share some thoughts with me, that he's an older man. He writes, "You will surely agree with me that as history teachers the great powers usually collapsed not because of their weakness but paradoxically because of their strength. Strength makes for arrogance. Arrogance makes for blindness. Blindness does not permit one to see all. Real, potential, or even hypothetical dangers nemesis, perils, risks and threats. Arrogance does not permit one to see and identify them early enough, clearly enough and correctly enough. The great powers collapsed when they had reached the peak of their strength. When they were at the peak of their economic, political or military abilities, capabilities or possibilities. They always collapsed when their actions, endeavors and undertakings were not harmonized or synchronized with the quality of their time. As it appears the quality of the present moment is little favorable for America. Yet not only does America need America, the world needs America. The world truly does need America to be strong and powerful although not necessarily warlike and belligerent. I wish you a happy 2004," the letter concluded.

Thank you very much.

## **Question and Answer Session:**

**Question:** Professor Brzezinski, what exactly do you think we should now be doing vis-a-vis Iraq that we are not doing to bring about the kind of outcome that you think is essential within a reasonable period of time?

**Dr. Brzezinski:** Well, basically two things, both of which I hinted at in my presentation. One, we have to be aware of the fact that there is not solution to the problem of Iraq in isolation from related problems, so we have to have a comprehensive strategy that parallels what we're doing in Iraq with efforts in Afghanistan, vis-a-vis Pakistan and Iran and the Middle East peace process. That is a broad proposition. Secondly, the sooner we can transfer authority to the United Nations so that they are the umbrella authority, the sooner we create a government that we transfer nominal sovereignty to, the sooner we can begin to cope with the problems of that country. The longer we delay, the internal hostilities are likely to intensify, and as we try to transfer power belatedly and with some delay with the Iraqis we may find them at war with themselves as well as with us. So it's a question of accelerating a process, which has been under discussion for quite some time.

**Question:** Do we need a change in administration in order to accomplish this?

[Laughter]

**Dr. Brzezinski:** You know, I don't think that strategic intelligence, which is ultimately God's gift, is only confined to Democrats, there are a few Republicans which have it also.

**Question:** You commented that political dignity was a pre-condition for democracy. If we were to get a report card today, what would our grade be for the United States? And secondly, in reverse order then, if we lose our political dignity can we lose democracy?

**Dr. Brzezinski:** I think people without a sense of their own dignity tend to be outraged, more violent, more destructive. Political dignity means a condition in which you have respect for yourself. You are not governed by others. That's why I think that it's a precondition for democracy. Do we have it in our country? Yes, I think we do. We have many shortcomings in our country, but I think we have political dignity and are proud of our fundamental freedom. I happen to be concerned about some aspects of the Patriot Act, but that's an issue on which perhaps we all differ. I do have to say that although I'm concerned about the Patriot Act and it pains me to see how it has violated in regards to scores, maybe some hundreds of people in our country, I am still a realist enough to realize that this doesn't mean that three hundred million Americans are deprived of their civil rights. The potential danger is there, but it's not a reality. So, yes we have political dignity in this country and yes we are a democracy. Yes, we should be concerned of steps that take us away from democracy because of excessive fear and panic mongering.

**Question:** You took up to the edge that we needed a concrete strategy for Iraq. What is it? Is it a coalition-occupation such as we had in Germany or Japan, which would be a coalition-force, or is it another strategy?

**Dr. Brzezinski:** Well, to some extent I answered that in the first question. Namely that there is no alternative to our presence, but the sooner we can change the umbrella under which we operate and the sooner we can define an Iraqi authority which is defined as nominally legitimate and can begin to act as the boss in Iraq under UN supervision, the less the onus will be on us and the easier it will be for us to get our friends to help us. I mean we want more people in there, we want the Europeans in there, we want more money in there and that's not forthcoming under the present arrangements.

**Question:** This morning I was over to see Prime Minister Erdogan of Turkey give a speech and he says that Turkey is now determined to stay one step ahead in new negotiations on Cyprus. If that negotiation does succeed, what do you think Turkey's chances to have a positive outcome in December later of this year as far as gaining an accession date to the European Union, and what can and should the United States do to encourage such an outcome?

**Dr. Brzezinski:** Well, we are actually encouraging it. On this issue I don't think there is too much divergence between my views and the views of the administration. We are, in fact, encouraging it. At the same time, we have to be somewhat careful, after all, we are telling the Europeans to consider Turkey for membership. We're not asking the Turks to join us in some sort of territorial unity. It's them who have to decide that. It is Europe that has to make that choice if Turkey is going to be in Europe, or not. My sense is that the Europeans have not really made up their minds on that issue. There's a lot of ambiguity and ambivalence, which is understandable. There are still a few things the Turks have to do to fully qualify and the Turks shouldn't deceive themselves into thinking, as many of them say, that Europe needs Turkey more than Turkey needs Europe. It's the other way around actually. Turkey needs Europe more than Europe needs Turkey.

But Europe also needs Turkey because if Turkey is destabilized it becomes a typical kind of unstable Middle Eastern country, than Europe's security is affected. So, the long-range trend I think clearly points in the direction of an increasingly binding relationship. There are people in this room more qualified than I to give answers on any sort of date to be given, but I sort of doubt it would be given. Maybe it will be. But if it is, it probably won't be soon. I think more likely is the pattern of both reinforcement of Turkish confidence so they don't turn away, but at the same time not yet a totally firm, clearly binding commitment tied to a particular date.

**Question:** The anti-Judeo Christian feeling among the militants, people of the book so to speak, pre-dates Israel-Palestine -- goes back to 622 when Muhammad escaped Mecca and came to Medina. My question is what can be done or is being done to reform the educational systems for example in Saudi Arabia and in other countries?

**Dr. Brzezinski:** Well, I'm convinced that chronological continuity, which you emphasized, and since those dramatic years you mentioned, I think 621 you said, there were some other episodes which somewhat complicate the very simple cause and effect chronology that you have expressed. For example, the Crusades somehow or another, that weren't particularly appealing to the Muslims living in the area, then in more recent times Anglo-French colonialism, that was a little troubling, so there are other things that complicate the picture.

Also, I don't have a sense that those terrorists that we have caught are killed from what we know are profound students of history. They tended to be more outraged by the circumstances in which they existed, and these may be emotionally distorted by their side but they are not unrelated to some of the problems that I have mentioned. So a kind of religious determinism, which is the obverse of Marxist materialism, is not, I think, a good guide for policy regarding a complex and important issue.

**Question:** Oppressive governments are basically there for power and money and these governments take various forms, from Saudi Arabia to the democracy in Mexico, where the corruption is so pervasive that the average citizen is scared to death of their local police, and the powerful United States cannot even get their trucks across the border without paying corruption, which leads me to my question. What are your thoughts on how we can solve the Palestinian question when the people in power, Arafat going on down, are very comfortable because A, they're in power, and B, they're gathering money and making money and they have no reason to settle and do anything for their people.

**Dr. Brzezinski:** Well, I do not know if you are familiar with the so-called Geneva Accords. The Geneva Accords involved a very detailed blueprint for an Israeli-Palestinian settlement and this blueprint was developed by a series of Israelis and Palestinians working together. It's a very detailed formula for a solution. It essentially not only articulates, but spells out in unusual detail, what in effect represents the broad international consensus regarding what a fair settlement would be. A fair settlement that deals with the overlapping but legitimate claims of both the Israelis and Palestinians for the same territory, which deals with the reality of two people locked into a struggle from which they find it difficult to extricate themselves.

I think the task for the international community is to encourage those Israelis and Palestinians who are prepared to implement that. And they happen to be a few. Public opinion polls show a great deal of support for that kind of an approach among Israelis and among Palestinians. To reduce the problem merely to the Arabs and to Arab corruption is to adopt a position of essentially perpetuating the conflict, and believe me, that is not going to be good for anybody. It will be bad for us because we will be increasingly targets for terrorism, it will be bad for the Palestinians because they are weak and have the hell beaten out of them, and it is bad for the Israelis because it poisons the quality of life in Israel, drives young people away from Israel, dims hopes for Israel, and eventually creates a situation in which if this conflict continues and the Israelis dominate the Palestinians, the Palestinians, being more numerous than the Israelis, there will be an outcry worldwide – a one-man, one-vote solution, which means the end of Israel. So I

think there is common sense here that provides a way out, and I think that people of good conscience and moral responsibility should not be afraid to stand up and say that this is the way to go.

**Question:** Could you put on your fortune-telling hat or look into your crystal ball? Are we at a moment now where the vision of Europe that was focused by its founders for a United States of Europe in the future is disaggregating because of the number of the countries, because of creating a tiered Europe, because of all the other pressures, into a Europe that will not look like the United States of America, but will look more like a initial Common Market did?

**Dr. Brzezinski:** I think it is going to be more than a common market, but basically, you are quite right. The vision of an integrated Europe, almost like a single state, was more meaningful in the time when we used to have a different geographical definition of Europe. When we talk of Europe now, we think of Europe from Portugal, at least to the eastern frontier of Poland. That is the normal definition now of Europe in our parlance. We have forgotten that as recently as 20 years ago, when we said Europe – and we often used the term Europe – we really meant Western Europe and that is all we meant. Then there was Eastern Europe. Where did Eastern Europe begin? On the “L” west of Prague, west of Berlin, west, if you draw a straight line, of Vienna. That was all Eastern Europe. Today, when we say Europe, we mean everything up to Russia. When we say Western Europe, we mean the “Old” Europe. When we say Central Europe, that is the new portion of Europe, and who is Eastern Europe? That’s Belarus, that’s Russia, that’s Ukraine. So, the definition of Europe as changed, and the scope of Europe now cannot be confined just to a few Western countries.

First of all, efforts to that end, which were articulated in France, Germany and don’t have support even in those countries, because they know that this is not viable. What is more viable is probably an informal caucus within the larger Europe of countries with a like-minded outlook, and perhaps they can find some way of gaining for that caucus a somewhat separate range of responsibility. But by and large, the prospect right now is towards a Europe that unifies more economically, more slowly politically, and more slowly still acquires an expression militarily. But that’s not bad. It is still going to be very influential, and it is still going to be our partner. It’s going to be an asymmetrical partner, but that is perfectly all right too. I think we can work with such a Europe, and they need us. I think we have to be realistic about it.

The Europeans are not going to have the kind of unity that would permit the acquisition of military power, and they are not going to spend the money. You don’t acquire political power, military power, simply by saying Europe is going to have an autonomous, global military capability, which some European statesmen were proclaiming three years ago. They said, we’re going to have a 60,000 strong military rapid deployment force. Well, now they have a telephone book, this thick, which lists the names of all of the 60,000 men in national units that will be part of this force. But if you have a problem far away, you don’t send a telephone book, you send these forces. The problem is, these forces have never exercised together. They don’t have joint

deployment arsenals, they don't have effective plans, they don't have the logistics to be delivered to or sustain combat, and they don't have independent intelligence. They are exactly where they were three years ago. So, we have to be realistic. But that's not bad at all. Let's not demean Europeans. They are engaged in a great historical adventure, to turn a continent, which dominated the world through wars and competition into an entity of cooperation and decency and democracy. They are our natural ally. We should act accordingly and keep that in mind.

**Question:** Would you comment on a partial residue of the cold war, the African wars, which are less destabilizing to events in the West or Middle East, but have taken enormous numbers of lives, and have not demanded the attention of the West for a whole host of reasons, which you also may wish to comment on?

**Dr. Brzezinski:** I think we are all conscious that what is happening in Africa is a humanitarian disaster, and that is not only because of AIDS, but because of the wars. The fact is that we have all been passive. There is no doubt about that. And we have been passive because these wars don't threaten us. It is as brutal as that, and it is a moral failure, a massive moral failure. But that is reality. Reality is that one is inclined to respond more when one's interest is involved, if one's security is involved or one's well-being is involved. That's necessarily, unavoidably an indictment of the human condition, but that is what we are as human beings. So, yes, I think we should be doing more. I think the United Nations is the mechanism under which it should be done. I think the Rwanda tragedy is driving that lesson home, but it is a lesson that for obvious, very human reasons, we are somewhat reluctant to learn.

**Question:** Would you be kind enough to give us your perspective of Putin and Russia these days?

**Dr. Brzezinski:** I have not had the opportunity to look deeply into Mr. Putin's soul, [laughter], so I am at a disadvantage, although I doubt that I would have found very much there. I think the problem is that in dealing with Russian leaders there is a tendency to personalize the relationship and to define what is happening in Russia on the basis of what is shared in terms of a meeting or personal friendliness, which is to some extent deliberately nurtured, and is tactically useful but then acquires a life of its own. I think we have developed a rather simplistic view of what is happening in Russia. Russia is certainly not a totalitarian state any more, but it is not a democracy either, it is something in between and it is being torn in somewhat different directions.

The Putin regime, in my view, represents the last gasp in the Soviet era. This is a regime based on the KGB types, who were young KGB aspirants when the system fell. If you were in the KGB, you had more options to travel, you were better educated, you had access to Western literature as well as Western goods. You were privileged, and this is a very ambitious, able group of people who are still very much motivated by the notion of Russia being a great power, and who in my mind, do not fully understand the great geopolitical danger that Russia is actually in.

The country is with Moscow and St. Petersburg apart, not really modernizing itself. It is acting like a typical petrol state, in which a lot of income from oil is then spent in a flashy fashion in one or two centers where wealth is concentrated, but the country stagnates and even de-industrializes. There is a problem with Russian population, more are dying than being born. There is a massive problem with the Russian far East, where the presence of Russians was deliberately subsidized by the government, and now that the subsidies are gone, the people are leaving. The same is true with the Russian north. And there is the simple reality that to the east of Russia, there is a country that has already five times the economy, nine times the population and is developing very dramatically. Will it be satisfied with a situation, let's say 50 years from now, in which a huge swath of Eurasia is empty but full of minerals, and that country itself is over populated, and just congested?

That is the dilemma that Russia faces, and therefore it has to go to the West. But we haven't been clear enough, in my view, in telling Russia that if you want to go to the West, you will be very welcome, but you will come in on our terms, and not while killing Chechens and while practicing dictatorship and abuse of power. I think if we are clearer, we will get a better Russia, sooner.

**Question:** President Bush in his latest state of the union address gave a nice little sound bite that said America will never "ask for permission" to defend its security. I'm wondering where you find the balance point that we can step back from the position of "if you're not with us you're against us" without stepping so far back that we feel handcuffed, and suddenly international opinion is defining how to use American power. What is the balance point, and how do we reach it?

**Dr. Brzezinski:** I think the answer to that is very simple. We have to know, in serious fashion, a responsible fashion, that our security is threatened. If we are attacked, it is very obvious. If we are not attacked, then we have to know that someone is about to attack us, not speculate or demagogue, or rely on intelligence that apparently is blind – that is good at writing papers, but doesn't seem to know what is going on.

The problem today is that we have a strategy that implies pre-emption, but we have intelligence that cannot tell us credibly whether we need to pre-empt. Where does that lead us? It leads us in terribly dangerous directions. Nobody in this country is arguing that we should make our national defense dependent on the United Nations deciding whether we have the right to defend ourselves, but if we are going to be pre-empting, we better damn well know that there is a real cause for that pre-emption. Unfortunately, what the president says is related to the recent decision to go to war in which the *causus belli* has been demonstrated to be false. Now, whether that was a deliberate lie or incompetence perhaps is to be debated. If it was a lie, those who made it should be held to account. If it is incompetence, those responsible for it should be fired. But you cannot have a situation where you admit you were wrong, but otherwise, everything is as it was before. In other words, everything is OK. You just can't have that.