

The Democrats' Kissinger

Zbigniew Brzezinski

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Vintage Zbig: From Between Two Ages to the Crisis of Democracy

Brzezinski's first major foray into the world of strategic analysis was published in 1970 while he was toiling away as a professor at Columbia. Entitled *Between Two Ages*, it detailed the domestic and international implications of the shift from an industrial society to what Zbig called the "technetronic" society. Although that term would be supplanted by the less awkward "post-industrial" society, much of the book remains relevant.

"This broad transformation [from industrial to post-industrial] is causing a crisis of established American values and institutions, particularly the tradition of liberal democracy, and as the nation's two-hundredth birthday approaches, it therefore calls for a redefinition of the American system...The social blinders that have made America unaware of its shortcomings have been ripped off, and the painful awareness of American society's lingering inadequacy has been rendered more acute by the intensity and pace of change. In a word, America is undergoing a new revolution, whose distinguishing feature is that it simultaneously maximizes America's potential as it unmask its obsolescence."

What is further interesting about Zbig's call for a "redefinition of the American system...of liberal democracy" and its potential "obsolescence" is that he spends most of the book still arguing on behalf of maintaining it, a la Hubert Humphrey, against the "Violent Left" and the "conservatives." Only to find in the following passage on just what ground this "liberal democracy" stands.

"The breakup of the postwar elite highlights the dichotomy between the qualities necessary to gain political power in American democracy and those necessary to exercise effective leadership of that democracy. The courtship of the press and the mass media is a necessary concomitant of courting the masses, since the masses are influenced not only by direct appeal but also through the intermediary of an 'image,' which is in part built up by the media themselves. The desirability of this image puts a premium on advocating the immediately popular and the fashionable rather than on formulating broader objectives by focusing attention on basic philosophical questions concerning the meaning of a modern society."

Here Zbig's lament recalls that of Walter Lippmann, a leading liberal theorist of elitist democracy, who wrote *Public Opinion* and *The Phantom Public* in the 1920s. Like Lippmann coincidentally, Zbig too is concerned that social science experts maintain their dominant role in policy formation free of meddling.

"Another threat, [along with black militancy and violent elements of the New Left] less overt but no less basic, confronts liberal democracy. More directly linked to the impact of technology, it involves the gradual appearance of a more controlled and directed society. Such a society would be dominated by an elite whose claim to political power would rest on allegedly superior scientific know-how. Unhindered by the restraints of traditional liberal values, this elite would not hesitate to achieve its political ends by using the latest modern techniques for influencing public behavior and keeping society under close surveillance and control. Under such circumstances, the scientific and technological momentum of the country would not be reversed but would actually feed on the situation it exploits..."

Persisting social crisis, the emergence of a charismatic personality, and the exploitation of mass media to obtain public confidence would be the steppingstones in the piecemeal transformation of the United States into a highly controlled society." Here is the closest thing to a prediction of what is indeed being realized in the post-9/11 climate. Young Zbig kept his humor about it though, offering that this anti-democratic tendency is "the subject of Vonnegut's *Player Piano*."

A final ominous observation comes at the opening of Part V, "America and the World."

"America's relationship with the world must reflect American domestic values and preoccupations. A profound discrepancy between the external conduct of a democratic society and its internal norms is no longer possible...so a nation concerned with social justice and technological adaptation cannot help but become similarly committed on an

international level."

And so, we find this formulation pointing out the discrepancy between Nixon's continuing to carry on the Great Society domestically contrasted with the horrors of Vietnam. Just what sort of shadow is then cast abroad following a quarter century of the brass-lunged repudiation of economic equality and social justice at home?

In 1975, Zbig was tapped by David Rockefeller to head the Trilateral Commission, a policy planning club designed to bring American, Western European and Japanese intellectuals together. An early book length analysis, entitled *The Crisis of Democracy*, still represents perhaps the clearest distillation of elite liberal hostility to democracy. (No need to meditate on the stance of the corporate right wing) This now obscure tome--try finding it on the internet some time--was written by a troika of French, Japanese and American intellectuals. Harvard's Samuel Huntington, one of Zbig's mentors and of more recent *Clash of Civilizations* fame, did the Land of the Free proud. Huntington's more authoritarian observations are excerpted below courtesy of Noam Chomsky's essay "The Carter Administration: Myth and Reality."

"The report argues that what is needed in the industrial democracies 'is a greater degree of moderation in democracy' to overcome the 'excess of democracy' of the past decade. 'The effective operation of a democratic political system usually requires some measure of apathy and noninvolvement on the part of some individuals and groups.' This recommendation recalls the analysis of Third World problems put forth by other political thinkers of the same persuasion, for example, Ithiel Pool (then chairman of the Department of Political Science at MIT), who explained some years ago that in Vietnam, the Congo, and the Dominican Republic, 'order depends on somehow compelling newly mobilized strata to return to a measure of passivity and defeatism... At least temporarily the maintenance of order requires a lowering of newly acquired aspirations and levels of political activity.' The Trilateral recommendations for the capitalist democracies are an application at home of the theories of 'order' developed for subject societies of the Third World...

"As Huntington observes, 'Truman had been able to govern the country with the cooperation of a relatively small number of Wall Street lawyers and bankers,' a rare acknowledgement of the realities of political power in the United States. But by the mid-1960s this was no longer possible since 'the sources of power in society had diversified tremendously,' the 'most notable new source of power' being the media. In reality, the national media have been properly subservient to the state propaganda system, a fact on which I have already commented. Huntington's paranoia about the media is, however, widely shared among ideologists who fear a deterioration of American global hegemony and an end to the submissiveness of the domestic population...

"A second threat to the governability of democracy is posed by the 'previously passive or unorganized groups in the population,' such as 'blacks, Indians, Chicanos, white ethnic groups, students and women -- all of whom became organized and mobilized in new ways to achieve what they considered to be their appropriate share of the action and of the rewards.' The threat derives from the principle, already noted, that 'some measure of apathy and noninvolvement on the part of some individuals and groups' is a prerequisite for democracy."

Salad Days with the Muj

Having done such a bang up job at the Trilaterals, Jimmy Carter appointed Zbig National Security Advisor in 1977. He was reliably the most hawkish member of Carter's foreign policy team. For the sake of brevity and impact, we'll touch on Zbig's under-appreciated foreign policy legacy in Afghanistan in the late 1970s.

Robert Gates, career spook and Bush I's CIA Director, in his memoir *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insiders Story of How Five Presidents Won the Cold War*, relates a few interesting anecdotes. As many Democrats now love to point out, the Reagan administration is generally 'credited' with 'liberating' Afghanistan from the vile, secular, deterrence-minded forces of Allah-less Communism. In actual fact, Osama's Army got up and running under the watchful eye of Mr. Habitat for Humanity and Zbig. Per an approving Gates:

"The Carter administration began looking at the possibility of covert assistance to the insurgents opposing the pro-Soviet, Marxist government of President Taraki at the beginning of 1979... [i.e. nearly a year prior to the Soviet invasion]

From Pakistan, [where he paid an infamous visit, as we will see below, in February 1980]

Brzezinski went on to Saudi Arabia, where he cemented the arrangement that the Saudis would match the U. S. contribution to the Mujahedin...

The last act on Afghanistan in the Carter administration was a meeting between [CIA Director Stansfield] Turner and Brzezinski on October 19, where the latter complained 'over and over' that he didn't think CIA was providing enough arms to the insurgents and wanted the Agency to increase the flow. Back at the Agency, the Director of Central Intelligence said that he sympathized with this point of view and wanted to be able to reassure Brzezinski when they next met that CIA was pushing everything through the pipeline that the Pakistanis were willing to receive."

One CIA colleague of Mr. Gates was Milton Bearden, who served as station chief in Pakistan from 1986 to 1989, where he was the point man for providing military and training support to Osama & Co. He quotes Zbig in a lengthy 2001 piece for the periodical of the Council on Foreign Relations, Foreign Affairs.

"We know of their deep belief in God and we are confident that their struggle will succeed. That land over there is yours. You will go back to it one day, because your fight will prevail and you'll have your homes and your mosques back again, because your cause is right and God is on your side."

Bearden further relates the atmospherics of this pep talk for the proto-Northern Alliance, Taliban and al Qaeda.

"In January 1980, Carter sent his national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, for consultations with Pakistani leaders who were already supporting the Afghan resistance. On a side trip from Islamabad, Brzezinski traveled the length of the Khyber Pass to the outpost at Michni Point, where he was photographed squinting along the sights of a Soviet AK-47 assault rifle, its muzzle elevated and pointing into Afghanistan. In that moment, the president's national security adviser became the symbol of the impending U.S. phase of involvement in Afghanistan's endless martial history."

Having had the benefit of nearly two decades of hindsight, Zbig gave an uncharacteristically exuberant interview to Le Nouvel Observateur in 1998. This widely reported exchange will be concisely related here. Not only did Zbig cop to presiding over the start of American collaboration with the evildoers, he further "wrote a note to the president in which I explained to him that in my opinion this aid was going to induce a Soviet military intervention...we didn't push the Russians to intervene, but we knowingly increased the probability that they would." The interview concluded thus:

Q: When the Soviets justified their intervention by asserting that they intended to fight against a secret involvement of the United States in Afghanistan, people didn't believe them. However, there was a basis of truth. You don't regret anything today?

Zbig: Regret what? That the secret operation was an excellent idea? It had the effect of drawing the Russians into the Afghan trap and you want me to regret it? The day that the Soviets officially crossed the border, I wrote to President Carter: We now have the opportunity of giving to the USSR its Vietnam War. Indeed, for almost 10 years, Moscow had to carry on a war unsupportable by the government, a conflict that brought about the demoralization and finally the breakup of the Soviet empire.

Q: And neither do you regret having supported the Islamic radicals having given arms and advice to future terrorists?

Zbig: What is most important to the history of the world? The Taliban or the collapse of the Soviet empire? Some stirred-up Moslems or the liberation of Central Europe and the end of the cold war?

Q: Some stirred-up Moslems? But it has been said and repeated: Islamic fundamentalism represents a world menace today.

Zbig: Nonsense! It is said that the West had a global policy in regard to Islam. That is stupid. There isn't a global Islam. Look at Islam in a rational manner and without demagoguery or emotion. It is the leading religion of the world with 1.5 billion followers. But what is there in common among Saudi Arabian fundamentalism, moderate Morocco, Pakistan militarism, Egyptian pro-Western or Central Asian secularism? Nothing more than what unites the Christian countries."

Zbig's flippancy is breathtaking considering that he is describing the intentional

manufacture of a war which eventually devastated an entire country, killed over 1 million people and by 1998 had unambiguously turned Afghanistan into a fundamentalist hell hole and terrorist haven. (This repugnant rhetoric recalls Kissinger's remark concerning the Iran-Iraq War; another bloody conflict costing over 1 million lives whose launch by Saddam Hussein was not condemned and likely tacitly backed by the Carter Administration. "Can't they both lose?" was Kissinger's cheeky aside once the war had stalemated in the mid-1980s.) There are, let us not kid ourselves, millions of Muslims and Arabs, some of them potential al-Qaeda recruits perhaps, who remember such things and many other American government-sponsored duplicities besides.

The Oracle of Empire...

In 1997 Zbig wrote his a fascinating foreign policy analysis called *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*. It is here that Zbig lays out American claims to the "Eurasian Balkans." This "global zone of percolating violence," comprises the Middle East and Central Asia, precisely the 27-country region in which American troops and materiel are now deployed in fully fourteen states (Israel, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Georgia, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan and Pakistan). We may rest assured that our troops were sent to the latter six lands only to fight terrorism after 9/11.

In Chapter 5, Zbig starts off by noting that, certainly in the post-Cold War world, in Turkey, the Levant and the Arabian Peninsula "American power is the ultimate arbiter." The Eurasian Balkans, however, differ "in one particularly significant way: they are a power vacuum...and a power suction." Lying as they do "astride the inevitably emerging transportation network meant to link more directly Eurasia's richest and most industrious western and eastern extremities...they are [also] of importance from the standpoint of security and historical ambitions to...Russia, Turkey and Iran."

Meanwhile, in the background stand China and the United States. That said, the Eurasian Balkans "are infinitely more important as a potential economic prize: an enormous concentration of natural gas and oil reserves...dwarf[ing] those of Kuwait, the Gulf of Mexico, or the North Sea." Given that world energy consumption "will rise by more than half between 1993 and 2015...massive pressures for the exploration and exploitation of new sources of energy" is bound to mount. When considering the stakes, "access to that resource and sharing in its potential wealth represent objectives that stir national ambitions, motivate corporate interests, rekindle historical claims, revive imperial aspirations, and fuel international rivalries." Plus, we've got to get the evildoers.

Zbig then returns to one of his favorite topics: Afghanistan. This abettor of the modern political jihad remarks blandly, "Afghanistan's current state of disarray is likewise a Soviet legacy..." We find that "the jihad against the Russians occupiers" somehow resulted in "an Islamic revival" which will be "determined to oppose any reintegration under Russian [one might imagine, in the current context, the same might be said for American] control."

As clearly and brazenly as Zbig articulates his position, it is imperative to realize that for the Middle East, Central Asia and the Caucasus, his vision is actually less ambitious than that of the Bush administration. He concludes the chapter with this. "It follows that America's primary interest is to help ensure that no single power comes to control this geopolitical space and that the global community has unhindered financial and economic access to it." This "geopolitical pluralism" would assure that the United States would preside over a system in which a variety of multinational corporations would exploit the regional energy supply, although not necessarily backed by military muscle on the ground. In short, Zbig and his realist liberal friends want to dominate with a multilateral veneer while Bush and his neoconservative backers have no problem dominating unilaterally. This distinction without a difference is also known as "democratic choice."

...And His Neoconservative Fellow Travelers

In September of 2002, based on the excellent reporting of Neil Mackay, writing in Scotland's *Sunday Herald*, we find the following.

"A secret blueprint for US global domination reveals that President Bush and his cabinet were planning a premeditated attack on Iraq to secure 'regime change' even before he took power in January 2001.

"The blueprint, uncovered by the *Sunday Herald*, for the creation of a 'global Pax Americana' was drawn up for Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, George W Bush's

younger brother Jeb and Lewis Libby (Cheney's chief of staff). The document, entitled "Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategies, Forces and Resources For A New Century," was written in September 2000 by the neo-conservative think-tank Project for the New American Century (PNAC).

"The plan shows Bush's cabinet intended to take military control of the Gulf region whether or not Saddam Hussein was in power. It says: 'The United States has for decades sought to play a more permanent role in Gulf regional security. While the unresolved conflict with Iraq provides the immediate justification, the need for a substantial American force presence in the Gulf transcends the issue of the regime of Saddam Hussein.'

"The PNAC document supports a 'blueprint for maintaining global US pre-eminence, precluding the rise of a great power rival, and shaping the international security order in line with American principles and interests.'"

This line of thought is further confirmed by a September 4th CBS News report by David Martin.

"CBS News has learned that barely five hours after American Airlines Flight 77 plowed into the Pentagon, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld was telling his aides to come up with plans for striking Iraq - even though there was no evidence linking Saddam Hussein to the attacks...

"With the intelligence all pointing toward bin Laden, Rumsfeld ordered the military to begin working on strike plans. And at 2:40 p.m., the notes quote Rumsfeld as saying he wanted 'best info fast. Judge whether good enough hit S.H.' - meaning Saddam Hussein - 'at same time. Not only UBL' - the initials used to identify Osama bin Laden.

Now, nearly one year later, there is still very little evidence Iraq was involved in the Sept. 11 attacks. But if these notes are accurate, that didn't matter to Rumsfeld.

'Go massive,' the notes quote him as saying. 'Sweep it all up. Things related and not.'

Zbig on the Home Front: Whip Up and Frighten the "Masses"

As The Grand Chessboard draws to a close, Zbig flatly reasserts his long-standing contempt for the public helping to formulate foreign policy. Contextualized by his prediction that the American share of global GDP is due to drop from 20% to the neighborhood of 15% and perhaps lower in the next quarter century, Zbig pointedly states that

"the window of historical opportunity for America's constructive exploitation of its global power could prove to be relatively brief, for both domestic and external reasons. A genuinely populist democracy has never before attained international supremacy. The pursuit of power and especially the economic costs and human sacrifice that the exercise of such power often requires are not generally congenial to democratic instincts. Democratization is inimical to imperial mobilization."

This last bit, more befitting some 19th Century arch-Tory than a leader of the Democratic Party's foreign affairs establishment, requires another translation. Thanks to our honest leaders and mass media, Americans aren't exhorted to "imperial mobilization," but rather to "homeland defense" and the "spreading of democracy and free market prosperity."

And so, "imperial mobilization" is not only hindered by the extension and greater exercise of democratic rights, but also by "America becom[ing] an increasingly multicultural society." Greater ethnic diversity may make it "more difficult to fashion a consensus on foreign policy issues, except in the circumstances of a truly massive and widely perceived direct external threat...In the absence of a comparable external challenge [like World War II] American society may find it much more difficult to reach agreement regarding foreign policies that cannot be directly related to central beliefs and widely shared cultural-ethnic sympathies and that still require an enduring and sometimes costly imperial engagement."

Translation: it's going to be more difficult to whip up a diverse populace into supporting a perpetual war footing unless the government can really scare the hell out of us or more subtly tap into jingoistic impulses.

Nazi Luftwaffe chief Hermann Göring, while imprisoned at Nuremberg made reference to the

difficulties inherent in "imperial mobilization."

"Why of course people don't want war. Why should some poor slob on a farm want to risk his life in a war when the best he can get out of it is to come back to his farm in one piece? Naturally the common people don't want war, neither in Russia, nor in England, nor for that matter in Germany. That is understood. But, after all, it is the leaders of the country who determine the policy and it is always a simple matter to drag the people along, whether it is a democracy, or a fascist dictatorship or a parliament, or a communist dictatorship. Voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the peacemakers for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same in any country."

In the United States, resistance to "imperial engagement," according to Zbig, must compete with two "extreme [viewpoints which] command the loyalties of committed constituencies." The first dread view holds that "the time has come for genuine international multilateralism, to which America should even yield some of its sovereignty." Others advocate the utopian notion that "the end of the Cold War justifies a significant reduction in America's global engagement, irrespective of the consequences for America's global standing." Just how the average American benefits from "America's global standing," easily translated as troops in 100+ countries to enforce political and economic obedience to Washington's whims, is left unexplained.

Zbig gives up more of the game in quoting a public opinion survey done by the Center for International and Security Studies at the University of Maryland. One finds that the "extreme" view actually has quite a "constituency" indeed: the vast majority of ordinary people. Fully 74% agreed with the nutty notion that "America should do its fair share in efforts to solve international problems together with other countries." Alas, only 13% joined Zbig & Co with their putatively "mainstream" view that "as the sole superpower, the U.S. should continue to be the preeminent world leader in solving international problems." Underpinning both "extremes" mentioned above--specifically what might be called the "cooperative" and "isolationist" wings of popular American thinking on foreign policy--we find "a widespread disappointment with the consequences of the end of the Cold War."

Instead of a new world order based on consensus and harmony, we neither rearranged our society's priorities on the Cold War's end, nor did we, as 9/11 demonstrated, enhance the security of our country after essentially vanquishing the Soviet nuclear Sword of Damocles. With any luck, maybe Zbig and the Neocons will be able to put their heads together--in the spirit of bipartisanship--and sort all this stuff out for us.