

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

**“AMERICA IN THE WORLD: FORGING A NEW VISION
FOR FOREIGN POLICY AND INTERNATIONAL
SECURITY.”**

“NATIONAL INSECURITY AND GLOBAL SECURITY.”

LUNCHEON KEYNOTE SPEAKER:

**ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI,
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MR. JEFFREY LAURENTI: Attention please. May we please have your attention? Thank you. My name is Jeff Laurenti, senior fellow at the Century Foundation, and it's my pleasure to transition our lunch from food for the body to food for the mind. I will take us back a few years to my own wee childhood, back to early in Dwight Eisenhower's presidency, because at that time President Eisenhower faced a two-pronged challenge to his foreign policy vision from the old guard troglodytes of his party who controlled the Senate.

By both constitutional amendment and a steady drumbeat of charges of communist infiltration of the executive branch, they bid to reset America's foreign policy in a direction that would be both radically unilateralist – what was then called isolationist – and aggressively even preemptively anticommunist. With the cunning and help of Senate Minority Leader Lyndon Johnson, Eisenhower turned back the challenges of John Bricker and Joe McCarthy and firmly locked in what might be called realist internationalism as the basis of U.S. foreign policy for successive administrations of both political parties for more than a generation.

Now, in this tradition of realist internationalism, leaders looking left might attach visionary innovations like John Kennedy's Alliance for Progress, nuclear test ban initiatives, and Jimmy Carter's promotion of human rights and Arab-Israeli peace accords. Leaders tilting right might shortchange human rights in making strategic investments in shahs and Pinochets, but they would also work through international institutions to create a UN environment program, a World Food Program, negotiating Arab-Israeli disengagements, and start a Madrid process for comprehensive Middle East peace. Realist internationalism didn't always make for bipartisan consensus, but it did make for bipartisan common ground.

Alas, faith-based Americanism seems to have displaced realist internationalism in governing circles in recent years. And after opening the Pandora's box into which Eisenhower and Johnson had locked away the foreign policy fantasies of the irrealist right, today's decision-makers find little common ground on foreign policy with much of the American public, American Congress, much less the rest of the world.

So at the time of bitter polarization at home and abroad over America's international policy approaches, we do well to seek the perspective of one of America's great strategic thinkers and practitioners of realist internationalism. And we are fortunate that he will challenge us today to think far beyond our dessert. Zbigniew Brzezinski sealed his academic reputation decades ago at Harvard and Columbia universities as a clear-eyed analyst of Soviet ideology, motivation, and power. I had to read one of his books when I was a freshman in college, so he was already clear-eyed and on the academic star list then.

An impressed President Jimmy Carter made him national security advisor, where he shaped policy toward the post-Helsinki communist world, just as Poland's Solidarnosc movement shook the Soviet bloc (on its?) foundations, where he achieved the normalization of relations with China for which he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1981, where he guided policy in the Middle East – not just peacemaking

Arab-Israeli, but also dealing with the consequences of a bankrupt investment in the Shah and the first outbreaks of Islamic fundamentalism.

In the years since, Dr. Brzezinski – I guess is the standard America formulation, right? – has continued to be a voice of both intellectual and moral clarity, enjoying immense respect in both political parties at home and across the spectrum of leaders abroad. He has been judiciously above partisanship in his public commentary. Long viewed by his students as a tough but fair grader, in his latest book “Second Chance” – which is available just outside the door and by the miracle of presignature is already autographed for your purchase – he grades the foreign policy performance of the first President Bush a solid “B,” that of President Clinton a “C,” and that of the current Bush a full blown “F.” (Applause.)

He was, along with realist internationalists like Brent Scowcroft and James Baker, outspoken in warning against a hasty march towards war against Iraq, specifically saying that military action needed to be internationally approved and conducted in international operation, and that the UN inspectors had to have time to do their work. Indeed, the night the war began, he warned prophetically that if there are no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, this will be a colossal foreign policy disaster for the United States. He has been clear-eyed in alerting Americans of the urgency of achieving a just Israeli-Palestinian peace, most recently in the current issue of *American Prospect*.

In short, Zbigniew Brzezinski has usually proved to be right. Please join in welcoming the counselor and trustee of the Center for International Strategic Studies, Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski.

(Applause.)

MR. ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI: Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for these very generous remarks. I particularly appreciate them because they come from someone who has in effect just confessed that as a young student he was victimized by having to read one of my books, so I think this is doubly appreciated.

I was also gratified to hear a smattering of applause from the audience when my assignment of the grade “F” to the president was revealed. I noticed there are a few sadists here who really like someone to suffer, but I was with you in my feelings.

I have entitled my talk to you today, my remarks, as national insecurity and global security – national insecurity and global security. And I plan to make a rather simple point on that subject, but I’ll get to it by starting first of all with the background. And the background I wish to sight particularly at this stage is a public opinion poll taken worldwide among some thousands of people by the BBC some six to eight weeks ago.

And the findings of that poll, incidentally, have been reaffirmed more recently by another poll conducted by the Economist Research Unit, so there may be something to this poll that is worth noting. The question was very simple: identify those

internationally active countries that have the most negative impact or play the most negative role in world affairs. The answer was quite shocking – in some respects offensive, outrageous, but here it is. The three countries – because three countries are actually bunched together with one being the worst, second one being second worst, third being third worst, but very closely bunched together were respectively: Israel – now you might say that’s because of anti-Semitism, but then the next one was Iran, and the third one was the United States. You might say that’s envy, but there was something troubling about that connection; indeed, quite troubling, that gives food for thought.

You ask yourself, “What do they have in common. Why those three?” Well, one of them, of course, is very small. One is a medium power. One is a transcontinental superpower. But when you reflect about that choice and you ask yourself, “What do they have in common,” I was led to the conclusion that perhaps the root problem was that in all three cases the respective definition of national security of each country was highly indifferent to the national security of affected others. Their own definition of national security was indifferent to the affected security of others.

Let’s explore that. Israel, sensitive issue obviously. One can understand that people traumatized by the Holocaust – that they be concerned about the high standard of national security. One can certainly understand that in the setting of persisting Arab hostility, all of that breeds a sense of national vulnerability. And that sense of national vulnerability is not reassured by the availability of the most effective army in the region, nor is it reassured by the monopolistic possession of a significant nuclear arsenal.

Israel desired or favored the destruction of Iraq by the United States. Now it doesn’t hide its preference for the United States doing something to Iran, even though Israel itself has a powerful nuclear retaliatory capability. For reasons of security, it desires residual control over the Jordan Valley in the event that an independent Palestinian state is established. But that means that under some calculations, up to about 40 percent of the landmass of the Palestinian state would be part of an Israeli security zone. One can immediately see in this highly compressed statement that there is a collision between the legitimately felt sense of national insecurity and the security of others.

Look at Iran, an obscene rhetoric insensitive to history and to very understandable concerns and fears, particular those at whom it is directed – the repeated references implying or proclaiming the desirability of the destruction of Israel; radical support for militant movements in the region – Hamas, Hezbollah; ambiguity – deliberate ambiguity – about this nuclear program; and an apparent unwillingness to reassure the international community about its real intent.

But at the same time, genuine concern and probably not unjustified about a military encirclement by the United States with American forces in Iraq, American forces in Afghanistan – one in the West, one in the East – American forces on a much more limited scale but present politically in Azerbaijan, and a powerful American presence with a devastating punch in the Persian Gulf. Resentment over American economic warfare, which certainly has contributed to the serious crisis of the Iranian economy, and

some allegations that perhaps even more than economic warfare of a peaceful type is involved – that perhaps there are some attempts at economic sabotage from the outside – and of course proclamations of regime change.

You have here a mixture, again, of some elements of insecurity that is not unrelated to reality, but at the same time a posture that is absolutely insensitive to the security concerns of others.

What about the United States? The United States, the leading democracy in the world, the defender of freedom during the Cold War, today a country with a larger defense budget than that of all of the other states in the world combined. A military posture not only based on that preeminence, but also based on a doctrine that openly preaches both preventive and preemptive military action with established examples of a unilateral use of force based on false justification and resulting both in the occupation, but also the destruction, of another country. In addition to that, a periodic search for an annual enemy of choice, often reflected by congressional resolutions, so it was Libya, then it was Iraq, of course Iran is in the picture, but lately even China.

Look at the remarks by Secretary Rumsfeld when he was in Singapore at the IISS meeting not long ago. He expressed concern that the Chinese had increased their defense budget. And the U.S. Defense Department in its annual report to Congress took particular note of the fact that the Chinese are acquiring better missiles, better submarines and aircraft, and that, therefore, they should fully explain to the rest of the world their motives.

It must be perplexing to people abroad when they read such statements because some probably have noticed that the United States occasionally also acquires better aircraft, new submarines, et cetera. But in addition to that, there is also in this context of an enormous concentration on security and a concern about the security measures of others a cultural fear being propagated from on high and creating a sense of undefined but ever lurking threat, which reinforces the sense of vulnerability and insecurity in the country at large – a country traditionally very self confident about itself, a country which was very patient but gutsy in the 40-year long Cold War – in the course of which in its latter phases, within 28 minutes of the inception hostilities and in the course of the next six hours – something like 120 million Americans and Russians could have been dead instantly, and yet that did not produce national panic.

In this context, the United States is now negotiating with Iran in a manner which one perhaps might even suspect is designed to prevent a negotiated outcome because it is based on demands that the other side come to the table by making a priori concessions for the privilege of negotiating with the United States. And some leading American statesmen – for example, over the weekend Senator Lieberman, and echoed by some powerful lobbies – are actually and openly pushing for military action against Iran.

I think we see in this picture a situation in which each of these countries in different ways is unyielding in seeking maximum security for itself, irrespective of the

impact of that on this insecurity of others. And as a consequence, one has to wonder: what is likely to be the cumulative result – whether alternatives should not be considered.

For example, in the case of Israel, if the Israeli nuclear arsenal – some 200 weapons capable of destroying Iran if Iran were to attack Israel – is not a sufficient and credible deterrent, than what is it for? Against whom is it to be used? Against someone who doesn't have nuclear weapons? Or perhaps it would be a very clever political move to make it known that if the Iranians were to abandon completely any possibility of the acquisition of nuclear weapons, Israel would be prepared to consider a nuclear free Middle East, which is more or less what the Argentinians and the Brazilians have done when they stopped their race – and they were racing at one point – and we now have a de facto nuclear free zone Latin America. This is what has emerged also when South Africa, after the apartheid era, abandoned the weapons it actually had, and as a result in a sense Africa is a nuclear free zone.

What about Iran? If it is not seeking nuclear weapons and it says publicly that, one, it is not seeking them; two, it doesn't want them; and three, its religion forbids it to have them, then why doesn't it come up with some proposals of its own which would make others believe these three assertions instead of harboring not unreasonable suspicions, in part based on historical record that it is just possible that the Iranians may be lying when they say, "We're not seeking them, we don't want them, and our religion forbids us." Why not come up with some notion of how you could reassure the international community regarding something that you assert, correctly, you have a legal right to do, which is to have a non-weapons oriented nuclear program.

And if the United States is not planning to attack Iran, but generally wishes to negotiate with it, then why not say to the Iranians that for a suspension of enrichment, which incidentally currently is up to 5 percent of enrichment and for weapons you need 95 percent – but in return for a suspension of enrichment, the United States would simultaneously abandon some of the many sanctions it has adopted over the last 15 years or so, thereby creating a quid pro quo for a negotiating process instead of insisting the other side stops doing what it legally has a right to do, but which causes suspicions, while the United States itself doesn't have any effort to create the preconditions for a negotiating process?

I think in all of this there is a simple lesson as I said at the beginning of my remarks – a very simple lesson; namely, that security is more than just physical power and you don't buy national security *in toto* by the emphasis on simply power. National security in this day and age of interdependence, but also mutual vulnerability, is not an absolute, but a relative condition. There is in fact today in the world a reality that we have to recognize and we have to live with because we have no choice: that of the interdependence – interdependence – of insecurity, and we have to be able to manage it. And that is a special responsibility, particularly of the country with historically unprecedented military might. And that is the lesson which we should apply, particularly today in the Middle East where we are being tested, where our global leadership is being both asserted and challenged, and where the outcome of the conundrums that we face is going to be of critical importance not only to our global position but to our security and

to the security of the other two countries that I have chosen to focus on in this presentation.

We are all prisoners of a situation that we have all collectively shaped or are unintentionally perpetuating it. The Israelis – 40 years in the West Bank and that’s already far too long, the Iranians for 25 years consumed by a fundamentalist militancy that’s out of keeping with international order, and the United States – present in Iraq and the president and his advisors now muttering that perhaps we ought to consider our presence in Korea for 50 years as a model for the future.

I think what we have to face is that there are three issues we have to address and address urgently, because if we don’t then the insecurity of everyone will be increasingly justified and the consequences negative for all.

On Iraq, we have to signal credibly that we’re not going to be staying there for 50 years, we’re not going to be staying there for five years, we’re not going to be staying there for 15 months or whatever. We have to signal that we’re prepared to leave, but to signal in a fashion that actually generates some possibility of dealing with the problem as we leave. And that requires two things above all else: we have to be willing to go to the Iraqi leaders – all of them, and not just those sitting in the green zone protected by a 15-foot thick wall guarded by American soldiers. That’s where the, quote, unquote, “democratically elected government of Iraq” sits. We have to talk to all Iraqi leaders, those in the green zone, yes, and those in Kurdistan, yes, and those outside the green zone in Baghdad where they seem to be comfortable enough and secure enough to survive because they have some rules in the country and they have some physical power of their own, and we have to talk to them as well. That includes Sistani, that includes Hakim, that includes above all else Al-Sadr and his 60,000 strong militia.

And we have to be willing to say to them, “We have decided we’re going to leave and it’s not going to be either in 50 years or five years or whatever. It’s going to be fairly soon. But we want to talk to you about that departure and the purpose of our talking to you is to discuss what happens as we leave, how we leave, and most important of all when we leave. And we’re going to set that date jointly.” And as that dialogue goes on, we’ll identify those leaders who have the confidence to manage when we leave and we’ll probably spot those leaders who would be buying suitcases so they’re ready to leave when we leave. (Laughter.)

And I think in the course of these discussions, I think I would, if I was involved, let it be known after a while that we intent to leave in about 12 months or so. But I think at the same time, there’s one more thing we ought to do simultaneously with it, but maybe even before surfacing the 12 months deadline. We have to talk to all of Iraq’s neighbors about the consequences of our leaving and what they’re prepared to do about that. That includes Iran, to whom we should be talking and if we were talking more seriously about the nuclear problem, it would be easier to talk to them about the regional problem, too.

The fact is that every one of the countries around Iraq knows that it's vulnerable to the consequences of Iraq blowing up when we leave, literally for different reasons. And those of you who know the Middle East don't need me enumerating the reasons. So they have a potential stake in the explosion not getting out of hand and they all, however, are of the view that they'll not lift a finger as long we're there because all of them, including the Saudis who have recently said that our occupation is illegitimate, don't care for our presence and most of them view it as colonial and imperial undertaking. So we need to do these two things together. But we need to do them because the fact of the matter is the situation is not getting better, the hostility towards us is intensifying, and last but not least, a war like this can escalate. Every war is unpredictable in its consequences. There're going to be unintended collisions, provocations, and an enlargement of the war.

Just think of the following: about a month ago – I believe the correct number was 17 – 17 heroic descendants of Nelson's Navy were captured by the Iranians on the open seas and they promptly confessed in the next few days. Suppose those 17 had been American Marines, but not that particular group. And suppose the president went on the air in the evening and said that just this afternoon, in international waters in the Persian Gulf, 17 American Marines were massacred by the Iranians because they wouldn't surrender. And he's ordering a retaliatory strike against the ships in the port which executed this outrage – an Iranian port and Iranian ships. The country would support the president. I would support the president.

But of course, once we did it, two or three weeks from then would be some Iranian reaction, probably against our troops in Iraq, maybe in Afghanistan, maybe elsewhere. The point is, the continuing war in Iraq breeds pressure on the ground, in the dynamic of the situation, for an American-Iranian collision. And you have people like Lieberman going around advocating it already publicly. That is a real risk, and hence we not only have to do what I advocate regarding Iraq, we have to be prepared to negotiate seriously with the Iranians. And the only way to do that is, one, to get a regional dialogue going; and, two, to make a serious effort to get the nuclear discussions going by developing a quid pro quo with the Iranians in which their concession would be matched by our concession, and therefore there will be no loss of face or unilateral concessions by one side alone in order to launch the process.

And the third issue that we have to address is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict because it is poisoning the political atmosphere in the Middle East. It is generating more and more hostility towards the United States. And only people in a state of denial would disagree with that because the fact is anyone you talk to in the Middle East finds that to be one of the reasons for this more pervasive anti-Americanism which al Qaeda and groups like it can exploit.

And it's not particularly good for Israel either because to the extent that there is no peace and if the other issues are not addressed, the American position in the Middle East is progressively being undermined. And one has to ask oneself, "What are the long-range prospects for Israel if the American position in the Middle East is really undermined?" It's not going to be safeguarded if America alone now gets involved in a war with Iran. It will simply accelerate the process of the United States being bogged

down in a conflict that'll span Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan and eventually end in a geopolitical disaster for the United States, so here the task is also urgent.

And I, having been involved in this task, despair of the possibility of either the Israeli or the Palestinian leaderships being capable of reaching peace. There are good reasons for it, a variety of reasons, and different reasons in each case. But I also note that the public opinions on the Israeli side and Palestinian side increasingly accept certain basic principles which could be the foundation stones of a peace settlement provided someone from the outside steps forward, articulates those points, and pushes the peace effort with genuine energy both on the Palestinians and on the Israelis.

And the key elements of that framework for peace, which in my view America should articulate, are four. There are four of them. First of all: a bitter pill for the Palestinians, but it has to get administered – no right of return. Right of return means swamping Israel and destroying its essence, and no one can ask a country to accept that. That would be wrong.

Second point: bitter pill for the Israelis – sharing of Jerusalem. East Jerusalem has to be the capital of the Palestinians, and the Muslim part of the old city has to be part of it. And anyone who's been in the region knows that you can see the Golden Dome from almost any point in the West Bank. And if that is part of an Israel, there is no legitimate peace in the eyes of the Palestinians and the Arabs. Jerusalem has to be shared for practical reasons and ultimately for reasons of historical fairness.

Third: basic territorial accommodation on the '67 lines, but with mutual adjustments involving equitable land transfers, so that the most heavily urbanized Israeli settlements on the edge of the '67 lines can be incorporated in Israel, but with a Palestinian state compensated in Galilee and in the Negev so that there is no continued territorial irredenta. As it is, the '67 lines give the six million Israelis approximately 78 percent of the old British mandate of Palestine and the five million Palestinians only 22. So basically, that territorial division has to be maintained.

And the last point is: a demilitarized Palestinian state with international, perhaps American, military presence to ensure that Israel does not feel threatened.

In brief, if we are to be successful in the Middle East and, therefore, to be successful in the world – if we are to be successful in leading in living successfully with insecurity, we have to realize a very basic point: all accommodations to promote national security have to accept the reality of interdependence of insecurity in this day and age.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. LAURENTI: Talk about shock and awe. Because our time is limited, what we would like to do is take three questions at a time. So those with questions, please raise your hand.

Gentleman at the back?

Q: Hello, Tuck Maestrani (ph). I was wondering if you could just elaborate on your grading of the past three administrations.

MR. LAURENTI: Okay, professor grading. Over here?

MR. BRZEZINSKI: Why don't I answer one at a time?

MR. LAURENTI: Okay, we'll take one at a time then.

MR. BRZEZINSKI: I'll be very brief: page 185 of my book. It's on the table outside. Thank you. (Laughter, applause.)

MR. LAURENTI: Yes, over here.

Q: Hi, Mohammad Ali (ph). I'm a journalist. I work for Voice of America. If you could briefly touch upon the great sectarian divide in the Muslim world and what are the policies – the sectarian divide in the Muslim world, especially being fought in Iraq between conflicting political interests of Iran and Saudi Arabia, and what policy options that leaves for United States?

MR. BRZEZINSKI: Well, I think the most important point is for the United States not to be involved permanently into that conflict. The conflict may continue, but may also wane. There's no sort of a priori presumption justified historically that the conflict has to expand and dominate the Muslim world for decades and decades to come. It has occasionally risen in the past. It may subside. But it's not going to subside if the United States is a protagonist in that conflict itself, and I think we have to realize that because if we become a protagonist, then the escalation will favor the other side anyway because we are an outside force – an alien force – and we would be engaged in that conflict for decades to come.

MR. LAURENTI: On this side of the room.

Q: Andrej Tarkovsky (ph), Hudson Institute, visiting fellow. Professor Brzezinski, part of your plan for Iraq is based on the premise that neighbors Iran and Syria will behave constructively, rationally, and be driven by their national interest. But we have a contrary example. Let's take the case of Putin Russia, which you and I know well. Today's Putin anti-American push is driven by anything but national interest of Russia. Russia and the United States are natural ally in Central Asia and the Far East. It's driven by deep passion (and?) anti-American complexes.

Why do you think that Mr. Ahmadinejad will be more rational and not sway away by the desire to humiliate and weaken America as much as possible?

MR. BRZEZINSKI: Well, first of all, I'm not sure that it's very productive to mix up apples and oranges. I think the Russian problem has certain specificity to itself. The Middle Eastern problem has also its own special attributes. Beyond that, Mr. Ahmadinejad is obviously a pain in the neck and even elsewhere, but – (laughter) – one should not lose sight of the fact that Mr. Ahmadinejad is roughly a third-level official in the Iranian structure of power. We have sort of elevated him to the top because of his title, but that title doesn't mean that he has the power either of the military or even *in toto* over the government itself.

He is a political leader of some influence who plays a very important role, demagoguing internationally, but he's engaged in a struggle for power with others, and it's not in our interest to build him up. Sometimes I have the impression that engaging in a conflict with Ahmadinejad, we are almost intentionally building him up as the real face of Iran, whereas in fact Iran is a far more complicated political reality with a variety of groups competing and a tradition of statecraft which is serious, historically rooted, and which does not disregard, ultimately, Iran's own interest.

The Iranians know that if there was a conflict with the United States, they would get devastated. It's no consolation for them that we would get bogged down for years, and years and years and probably would pay an enormous price in terms of our global posture, but they know damn well that they would be devastated. Beyond that, we already have seen in the Iranian behavior, for example vis-à-vis Afghanistan after we moved in to throw out the Taliban, that the Iranians are quite capable of operating in a rational and sensible fashion where their interests are involved. And the untold story of the post 9/11 conflict in the region is the extent of the Iranian assistance to us late in 2001 and in 2002 in throwing out the Taliban, in establishing a new government in Afghanistan, and some key elements of that rational conduct on their part are still extant today, so that we have a mixed pattern of behavior on the part of the Iranians.

Similarly, the Syrians have demonstrated over the years a rather cool, but relatively rational, even though devious and mischievous, pattern of conduct. And they all know that if Iraq explodes, in different ways the violence in Iraq is likely to spread and be contagious to different elements in their societies, and that perhaps – I don't emphasize this as an apostolic truth – but perhaps gives them a stake in exploring seriously what can be done to stabilize Iraq provided we are leaving. And that is an interest which most of them happen to share.

MR. LAURENTI: Gentleman at this table.

Q: Amin Garbio (ph), Osgood Center. I just want to ask do you that the United States really burned its bridges already in the term like to –

MR. BRZEZINSKI: I'm sorry –

Q: Do you think that the United States burned its bridges in regard to Iran to make it go into some sort of soul searching to redefine its security alternative? In a way, the Iranian can really read the American action in a way. If your mantra is regime

change, if they see if you're some sort – apologetic to this nuclear issue with a regard to India nuclear deal – if they can see you, you can really accept it with Pakistan after all this firestorm. I think you – do you think that the Iran would see the nuclear capabilities more reassuring than this kind of –

MR. BRZEZINSKI: I'm sorry. I don't understand the question.

MR. LAURENTI: That Iran would see nuclear capabilities as more assuring than

–

Q: – engaging in this sort of negotiation with the United States.

MR. LAURENTI: Than engagement.

MR. BRZEZINSKI: Would the Iran prefer to acquire nuclear weapons rather than negotiate a condition with the United States? Is that ultimately the question?

Q: Yes, it's more reassuring and it's already been done with India and Pakistan.

MR. BRZEZINSKI: Well, first of all they don't have those nuclear weapons. They probably know better than we how far away they are from having them. They know that they live in a dangerous world. They know that there are major pressures on the United States to push them to the wall and perhaps to engage in conflict with them, so that they have probably rather mixed motives.

In a general sense, they probably would like to have nuclear weapons. They see their neighbors having them. Pakistan has them. India has them. Russia has them. Israel has them. So in that context, it's probably quite natural for them also to want nuclear weapons. But they can't ignore the risks between now and then, and they have to take them into account. And since they have gone on the record very differently from the North Koreans in saying they don't want it, they're not seeking them, their religion forbids them, then I think it at least creates an opening to explore how serious they are about these propositions and under what conditions might they be prepared to have an arrangement which greatly reduces or maybe even excludes the possibility of them moving from a nuclear program to a weapons program.

That's something which I think it's worth exploring. I don't think anybody in his right mind can categorically predict that this will work, but we certainly know what the option is if it doesn't work, and especially if we make that choice without having tried to make it work. We know it will be extremely costly, terribly damaging, very unpredictable in its consequences.

MR. LAURENTI: This will have to be our last question and it is back at the table there.

Q: My name is Dr. Patrick McGee and I study grand strategy, which in today's Washington means I'm looking for a job. (Laughter.) During the Carter administration,

you were quite successful in showing how moral authority can be a component of your overall structural power, but I don't sense much of that has filtered through to the current administration. What are some concrete steps the United States can take to restore its moral authority in terms of its overall power?

MR. BRZEZINSKI: Well, first of all, some of the things I was talking about would actually help. But I think it certainly is the case, particularly after 2008, that the United States will have to make a very serious effort at the highest level, from the president down, to redefine itself to the world, to convey to the world in a deeper and more meaningful sense that it understands the new global dilemmas that the world is facing, that it understands the quest for dignity on the part of the politically awakened mankind that no longer can tolerate the indignity of domination from abroad or of poverty or of social injustice – that we are prepared to be associated with these issues in a meaningful fashion.

I think the first instance that will be a matter of symbolism – what the new president will represent, what that president will stand for, the kind of message the president by virtue of occupying that office will convey, and then beyond that the serious focus on these issues in different international fora, be it the Doha Round or global ecology or social injustice or the war against poverty.

So in addition to the geopolitical issues, which are centered on the Middle East, we do have that huge challenge ahead of us and it will have to be met if we want the United States to remain a preeminent force for good in the world. And that is the real challenge for the next 20 months that we be ready to do that and that in the next 20 months we do not stumble into something which would preclude that possibility altogether.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. LAURENTI: Thank you very much. (Applause.) Thank you very much, Dr. Brzezinski, and if you want a second chance to get his thinking, the book – the eponymous book of the same name is available just outside the door on the same counter that has “Power and Superpower,” the new book of the Century/Center for American Progress joint venture on these issues.

We'll now take a 15-minute clean up break in order to clean the luncheon materials off the tables, put the tables together for our next panel on reconfiguring defense structures.

(END)