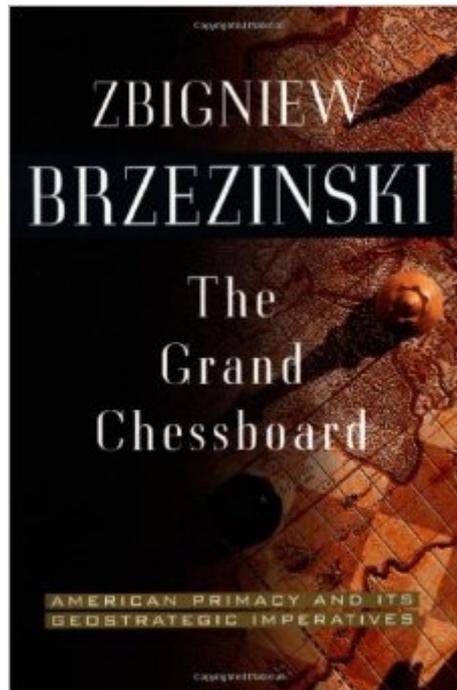


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The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy And Its Geostrategic Imperatives



Synopsis

As the twentieth century draws to a close, the United States has emerged as the world's only superpower: no other nation possesses comparable military and economic power or has interests that bestride the globe. Yet the critical question facing America remains unanswered: What should be the nation's global strategy for maintaining its exceptional position in the world? Zbigniew Brzezinski tackles this question head-on in this incisive and pathbreaking book. *The Grand Chessboard* presents Brzezinski's bold and provocative geostrategic vision for American preeminence in the twenty-first century. Central to his analysis is the exercise of power on the Eurasian landmass, which is home to the greatest part of the globe's population, natural resources, and economic activity. Stretching from Portugal to the Bering Strait, from Lapland to Malaysia, Eurasia is the "grand chessboard" on which America's supremacy will be ratified and challenged in the years to come. The task facing the United States, he argues, is to manage the conflicts and relationships in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East so that no rival superpower arises to threaten our interests or our well-being. The heart of *The Grand Chessboard* is Brzezinski's analysis of the four critical regions of Eurasia and of the stakes for America in each arena—Europe, Russia, Central Asia, and East Asia. The crucial fault lines may seem familiar, but the implosion of the Soviet Union has created new rivalries and new relationships, and Brzezinski maps out the strategic ramifications of the new geopolitical realities. He explains, for example: Why France and Germany will play pivotal geostrategic roles, whereas Britain and Japan will not. Why NATO expansion offers Russia the chance to undo the mistakes of the past, and why Russia cannot afford to toss this opportunity aside. Why the fate of Ukraine and Azerbaijan are so important to America. Why viewing China as a menace is likely to become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Why America is not only the first truly global superpower but also the last—and what the implications are for America's legacy. Brzezinski's surprising and original conclusions often turn conventional wisdom on its head as he lays the groundwork for a new and compelling vision of America's vital interests. Once, again, Zbigniew Brzezinski provides our nation with a philosophical and practical guide for maintaining and managing our hard-won global power.

Book Information

Paperback: 240 pages

Publisher: Basic Books; 1st Edition edition (September 18, 1998)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0465027261

ISBN-13: 978-0465027262

Product Dimensions: 0.8 x 5.5 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (112 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #27,295 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #14 in [Books > Textbooks > Social Sciences > Political Science > International Relations](#) #41 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Specific Topics > Globalization](#) #162 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Political Science > History & Theory](#)

Customer Reviews

Like others offering their reviews, I rate this book very highly not because it is a real "page turner" or is particularly well written, but because of its cold Machiavellian analysis of the need to protect and expand the American Empire and what that means to the ordinary Joe and Jane Citizen. Three things in this book made my blood run ice cold. The first is the complete absence of any sense of morality in the whole discussion. I do not mean that this is an *im*moral book, it is not a moral book, it is *a*moral in that there is literally no discussion whatsoever whether what is being proposed is RIGHT or should be done. That the recommendations to grow the American Empire are valid is simply assumed, not proven or even argued. The second thing was the whole discussion on how the political center of mass was Central Eurasia (i.e. the region between Turkey and Pakistan and between Iran and Turkmenistan) and how unlikely it was that we were going to be able to have a substantial presence in the region (in the near term) unless we have SOME PERL HARBOR CLASS EVENT to accelerate the populations willingness to accept the costs. Also, This Was Bad because it would delay our needed expansion. Then, just on cue, we have the 9/11 attacks, and dang if we don't end up with a Whole Bunch of military presence all throughout the heart of Eurasia... Coincidence? Makes one wonder. As if that is not enough, the book closes with a clear and unambiguous reference to the steps needed to get us to the One World Government of the New World Order. Read it and weep because, as another reviewer stated, he is not predicting the future, he is *planning* the future. Coldly. Methodically.

This is how Brzezinski views the (supposedly sovereign) nations of Central Asia: "The last decade of the twentieth century has witnessed a tectonic shift in world affairs. For the first time ever, a non-Eurasian power has emerged not only as a key arbiter of Eurasian power relations but also as the world's paramount power. The defeat and collapse of the Soviet Union was the final step in the

rapid ascendance of a Western Hemisphere power, the United States, as the sole and, indeed, the first truly global power..."Two basic steps are thus required: first, to identify the geostrategically dynamic Eurasian states that have the power to cause a potentially important shift in the international distribution of power and to decipher the central external goals of their respective political elites and the likely consequences of their seeking to attain them;... second, to formulate specific U.S. policies to offset, co-opt, and/or control the above..." (p. 40) - "...To put it in a terminology that harkens back to the more brutal age of ancient empires, the three grand imperatives of imperial geostrategy are to prevent collusion and maintain security dependence among the vassals, to keep tributaries pliant and protected, and to keep the barbarians from coming together." (p.40) - "Henceforth, the United States may have to determine how to cope with regional coalitions that seek to push America out of Eurasia, thereby threatening America's status as a global power." (p.55) - "America is now the only global superpower, and Eurasia is the globe's central arena. Hence, what happens to the distribution of power on the Eurasian continent will be of decisive importance to America's global primacy and to America's historical legacy." (p.194) - "That puts a premium on maneuver and manipulation in order to prevent the emergence of a hostile coalition that could eventually seek to challenge America's primacy..." (p. 198) - "The most immediate task is to make certain that no state or combination of states gains the capacity to expel the United States from Eurasia or even to diminish significantly its decisive arbitration role." (p. 198) - "For Pakistan, the primary interest is to gain Geostrategic depth through political influence in Afghanistan - and to deny to Iran the exercise of such influence in Afghanistan and Tajikistan - and to benefit eventually from any pipeline construction linking Central Asia with the Arabian Sea." (p.139) And ponder the meaning of these statements in a post-9-11 world: - "Moreover, as America becomes an increasingly multi-cultural society, it may find it more difficult to fashion a consensus on foreign policy issues, except in the circumstance of a truly massive and widely perceived direct external threat." (p. 211) - "The attitude of the American public toward the external projection of American power has been much more ambivalent. The public supported America's engagement in World War II largely because of the shock effect of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. (pp 24-5) To most Americans the people of the world are just that- people, just like us, with a right to self-determination. To Brzezinski, they are merely pawns on a chessboard. Such an imperialist strategy does not make me feel any safer- how did Napoleon's strategy fare for the French in the long run? Or the Roman emperors for their citizens? Rome fell, Hitler fell, all imperialist powers ultimately fail, because they follow the over-extended geopolitical strategy advocated by Brzezinski. While our military is busy fighting for oil interests all around the world, who's watching the front

door?

I read this book with disbelief. Brzezinski was for a long time a strategist, a political planner of the highest rank so I have to take him seriously. But I couldn't help but constantly wonder if the book is for real. It displays an unabashed and unapologetic view of the U.S. as a world 'hegemon' (author's word) and divides the rest of the world in 'vassals' (author's word), rivals, 'pivots' and strategically irrelevant countries. Western Europe and Japan are the prominent members of the first category, Russia and China of the second. The pivots are the countries that have strategic choices important to the U.S., such as the Ukraine. United Kingdom is an (amusing) example of strategic irrelevance. The book proceeds by systematically and often tediously analyzing case-by-case scenarios and what-ifs concerning the strategic impact of the policy decisions of the players (vassals, rivals and pivots) in four main theatres: Europe, Russia, Central Asia and the Far East. The analysis seemed rather un-principled to me but by the end I could discern some key points. The most important of them is that the U.S., despite its global hegemony cannot afford wars but it has to maintain its dominance by smartly playing the rivals against each other so that a major global rival does not emerge. I think the book's shocking disregard of democracy and national self-determination is quite consistent with the way the American administration tends to act in international affairs. Unfortunately, the current administration does not seem to take the book's main advice regarding the need for America to avoid outright wars and to dominate through smart diplomacy.

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