



CENTER FOR NATIONAL POLICY

“AMERICA AND THE WORLD”

FEATURED SPEAKER:

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**WASHINGTON, DC
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2008**

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MR. TIM ROEMER: Well, good afternoon, everybody. I'm delighted to have such an enthusiastic and large crowd for this afternoon's conversation. I think – I can see smiles on everybody's faces. They can't wait to hear from the two of you. So I'm going to make my introduction very short, and we're going to do this very differently than we usually do it. Usually I make a short presentation and introduce our distinguished guests and then they make a short opening statement, maybe sometimes 15 to 25 minutes, which is just about perfect for you then to engage with us in some questions and answers.

Today, we're going to do it very differently, because we have this as a template, the new book out by these two distinguished foreign policy scholars and experts, Brent Scowcroft and Zbigniew Brzezinski. If you've read the book, it's a conversation, and so we're going to try to have a conversation about some of these key issues, rather than individual presentations and then Q&A.

As I get ready to introduce these two friends and distinguished national security advisors to multiple presidents, and presidents continue to come to both of these gentlemen for their advice, their sage insight and their foreign policy expertise from around the world, I can't help but think about something that John F. Kennedy once said. He talked about having a host of Nobel laureates to the White House and said, "We haven't had so much intelligence in the West Wing since Thomas Jefferson dined here alone." (Laughter.)

I think if you had the two of these gentlemen in the West Wing today, you'd have a very close second to Thomas Jefferson. Maybe Jefferson and Adams together would equal Scowcroft and Brzezinski, but –

GEN. BRENT SCOWCROFT: You are getting carried away.

MR. ROEMER: – I might be – (laughter) – and look out, they're believing it, Brent. They're eating this up enthusiastically in the spirit of the holidays. (Laughter.)

GEN. SCOWCROFT: No, they're laughing.

MR. ROEMER: So we know their reputation; we know their experience. We know that they're sought out by world leaders and presidents and foreign policy people up on the Hill. What's so impressive is not just that they've worked for presidents, but it's also all about the way that they make their presentations and they engage one another. Here are two superpowers that don't go to war because they disagree. They're two gentlemen that can agree to disagree or that they look for common ground when they do disagree on a particular issue.

That is extraordinarily important in today's world, where we've had kind of a crumbling of the spirit of Democrats and Republicans trying to work together to solve

some of these complicated problems. It's certainly one of the missions here at the Center for National Policy that we try to develop, think about, and act on good ideas and then bring Democrats and Republicans together to try to debate and actively resolve those issues, rather than starting on the far Left or starting on the far Right and isolating the other side. How do we bring about great ideas and get consensus behind those ideas to move policy forward and see progress being made?

I'm very excited about today's opportunity here with Zbig and Brent joining us. We're going to try to do this as informally as possible. And I do want to make sure that anybody who has already purchased the book – we've had a couple of people who have come up to me – that you might be able to get an autograph on your way out. I think Mike Delaney, who's one of the key staff people on the House side to the intelligence chairman, has already asked both of them for an autograph. So if you have the book, or want to purchase the book later, I'm sure these two will be happy to sign it for you.

Let's start. One of the most interesting parts in the book is speaking about how quickly the world is changing and how that challenges our foreign policy in America. And Brent, if you could – if we could start off – 9/11 certainly changed the world and it changed American challenges around the world. It changed us.

Where were you on 9/11? And I understand it might have been a flying command post, where you had a very unique view of how our president and vice president communicated that day. What were your impressions about both what happened that day, and how it reflects on the changes that we're going through today?

GEN. SCOWCROFT: Well, on 9/11, I was chairman of a committee with DOD called an end-to-end review. We were looking at the nuclear weapons process from the laboratories when they're conceived, to the building of the weapons, to their employment by the armed services, to their destruction, and how was it going?

So that morning, me and my committee were going to fly out on the president's command – flying command post to Omaha for a briefing. So we were sitting at Andrews when the first plane went into the tower. We thought it was an accident. Just as we were taking off, the second one went in.

So we were in the air while all of this – while the government was trying to organize itself and so we had a very close look and it made us decide our command and control system was inadequate. And this plane – it took us 20 minutes to contact the control tower for landing instructions at Omaha. The president decided the only place – he was in Florida. The only place where he could run the system, but not to go back to Washington, but to go out to Omaha, and the SAC, at that time, the Strategic Air Command command post, to control the situation.

So it was a very – it was educational for us because part of what we were looking at was the command system, but to me, 9/11 was less the beginning of a new era, than the revelation of a new era and a world which had been changing during the Cold War, and

especially after the Cold War, and I would say globalization and all its ramifications really hit us after 9/11. And we've been, in part, playing catch-up ever since.

MR. ROEMER: Zbig, that brings us to – even before 9/11, the world was quickly changing, something you've been concerned about for a long time, the former Soviet Union and then Russia. Russia was born again in the 1990s and there were opportunities maybe to deal with some of these issues leading up to 9/11. You talk eloquently in the book and in your previous book, *Second Chance*, about some missed opportunities. How was the world changing so dramatically in the 1990s leading up to 9/11? What could we had done leading up to 9/11?

MR. ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI: I would say that the biggest change, in my view, that has happened in the last several decades, and of which 9/11 may be a symptom, is that we're now living, for the first time in all of human history, in a world that is genuinely politically awakened and that is something fundamentally new in human history.

It's the culmination of a process that started with the French Revolution, really. The French Revolution was the first massive political ferment in which the entire society was actively engaged in different ways, whether it was the nobility or the clergy or the bourgeoisie or the peasantry, and nationalism, of course, became the cement that welded them together.

And then France impacted in Europe. That phenomenon spread to Asia at the turn of the 19th, 20th centuries. Decolonization took place as a consequence of World War II, and then, of course, in addition to these political stimuli, we have had, in the course of the last century, the massive intrusion on the world scene of radio and telephones, television, and now internet. And all of that has created a seamless web in which all of humanity is now stirring, interacting, mutually influencing each other.

Now, that means that we're dealing with a world which is much more difficult to control. I think one of the paradoxes of our age is that governments, organized governments, have more physical power than ever before, and are less able to use it because the world is politically awakened.

I once said somewhere that in the past, it was easier to control a million people than to kill a million people. Today, it's much easier to kill a million people than to control them. If you're willing to kill them, you're really going to eliminate them, but governments operate under great restraints, so they can't – we can't kill everybody in Iraq or Afghanistan. The Russians couldn't kill everybody in Afghanistan either, because there are still now these restraints and a population that's politically awakened is much more difficult to control.

So I see 9/11 as the sort of quintessential step in the development of political violence from below, symbolizing the increasing lack of capacity of organized power to impose its will. And in my judgment, for example, one of the reasons of our failure in

Iraq has been that we have tried to wage what is an essentially colonial or imperial war in the post-colonial, post-imperial age.

So 9/11 was a symptom of this new reality now becoming dominant in our psychology. And that, in turn, raises some fundamental questions in my mind. How do we react? How do we deal with this phenomenon of terrorism? How do we mobilize the kind of political reactions in a stirred-up dynamic world impatient with its current reality, so that we isolate the terrorists, rather than to mobilize more support on their behalf by stigmatizing, for example, either whole religions or whole populations, and so forth?

This requires an altogether different vision of the world than the one that was pertinent in the 20th and even more so in the 19th century and this is where the challenge to America rises, in my view. How can we creatively and constructively lead in such a world without becoming overly dependent on the use of force, on unilateral actions, and eventually on being isolated? And so 9/11 to me is a symptom of a more fundamental change in the way the world operates.

MR. ROEMER: We talk about this change, Brent, and how quickly the world is changing. You talked about globalization in your opening comments. You also talk in the book about serving a couple of presidents when your overwhelming objective was the destruction of the world with nuclear weaponry, and now it's 100 pin pricks that could take place at any time. What do you mean by 100 pin pricks? How is that a challenge today for the new Obama administration?

GEN. SCOWCROFT: Almost overnight, we went from a world where we were consumed with the notion that a mistake on our part, or the Russian part, could, in effect, blow up the world, or destroy hundreds of millions of people. That's a very serious thing. All of a sudden, that was gone. And then in its place there were all these little problems, which we didn't have to pay much attention to in the Cold War, because they were subsumed under this great one. Now, they've become important. The putative source of the attack on the Trade Towers was Afghanistan, which we never paid much attention to.

So it's that sort of a thing, but I think what it means is that our way of looking at the world has to be very different. Instead of concentrating on a single target, which we did in the Cold War, intelligence, operation, military, we're looking at hundreds of targets, some of which we don't even identify as targets until something happens.

It's a very different world, but to me, it's also – it's a more promising world because I think that if we can get our act together, if we can work with our friends and allies, it's a world that's more amenable to the kinds of efforts we can bring than was the Cold War, where we just were sitting it out in a way.

We were not trying to transform the Soviet Union during the Cold War. We were trying to figure out how to defend ourselves against Soviet aggression. So it's a very different kind of a world. The problem is – as Zbig says, the problem is we're still

dealing with a mindset that stems from the Cold War and with institutions that were all built for the Cold War and even before.

MR. ROEMER: Let's talk about some of those institutions then, Zbig. Leading up to the '90s to the attacks on 9/11, we didn't get Pakistan right and India on testing. We could have missed a strategic understanding of al Qaeda and bin Laden. We didn't get weapons of mass destruction correct on Iraq. The CIA, the DOD, the United Nations, are these the right institutions for us? What needs to be changed, both in domestic institutions and international institutions, for us in this century to understand and deal with this changing world?

MR. BRZEZINSKI: I can't really answer that because it's such a huge question in both domestic and internationally, so –

MR. ROEMER: Start internationally, yes, and talk about the United Nations a little bit.

MR. BRZEZINSKI: Let me just focus on two issues.

MR. ROEMER: Okay.

MR. BRZEZINSKI: One is our domestic ability to react to the world and the other one would be the international.

MR. ROEMER: Okay. All right.

MR. BRZEZINSKI: On the domestic level, I want to talk about, of course, the NSC and how to coordinate the government, but let me comment on something which, to me, is more basic and yet, quite fundamental.

If my picture of the world, and Brent's picture of the world, is correct, and the picture that we both share is correct, it is an infinitely more active, dynamic, interactive, and complex world and "complex" essentially is the keyword.

We are a democracy. How does a democracy operate in relationship to the world? Only effectively if the public understands the issues and supports an intelligent policy set by the president and the Congress, the people's representatives.

Does the American public understand the world? My sort of fundamental conclusion is that we are basically out of touch with the world. We don't understand it. We cannot deal without complexity. Because we don't understand it, we are much more susceptible to demagogy.

At the risk of sounding partisan, let me say that I think 9/11 was then exploited to create an atmosphere of fear in this country, manifestations of which we see everywhere, including when we walk into this building, where we have to sign our names, allegedly

so that no terrorist goes up to the third floor and blow us up. (Laughter.) The person over there doesn't look at that register – I didn't do it here. If I did, I wouldn't tell you, but I did it somewhere else the other day, and I was asked to sign this and I was so irritated by the stupidity of the act that I wrote down Osama bin Laden. (Laughter.)

MR. ROEMER: You visited the third floor? We know where he is. (Laughter.)

MR. BRZEZINSKI: This is a symptom of a society that is really out of kilter with reality.

Now, we will have to have a terribly complex foreign policy today and in the years ahead to deal with the problems that we confront, both domestically and internationally, overlapped in a very dynamic fashion.

Can any president pursue a policy that's really complex and intelligent in that setting unless the public understands at least the fundamentals about the world? And the fact is the public doesn't. The public is woefully uninformed and there are endless examples of that.

I cite a few in my contribution to this discussion here, which came to be on the National Geographic. There was some sort of a test taken of college entrants about the world and I may not be right about the figures and the countries, but this kind of illustrates the problem on the last – something like 70 percent of these people, college entrants, couldn't find Great Britain on the map.

Something like 60 percent, after five years of war in Iraq, couldn't locate Iraq on the map. The last one impresses me the most because it almost raises the question whether there isn't just an intellectual, but almost a visual, problem on the part of the respondents. Only 30 percent could find the Pacific Ocean on the map. You sort of start wondering –

MR. ROEMER: It's staggering.

MR. BRZEZINSKI: It's staggering. Do we teach the history of our countries? Do we have any understanding of the differences among them? Apparently, our president didn't know that there's such a thing as a Shi'a versus a Sunni in Islam, something that has something to do with the complexities of the Middle East.

This is sort of one aspect of it that I find very, very troubling, and I do think one of the major tasks for the president-elect is going to be, since he's eloquent and intelligent, to really undertake a serious public education from the bully pulpit about what is this world about today? I could talk about this – (inaudible) – so let me stop here.

(Cross talk.)

MR. ROEMER: I would want to go back into that, yes.

MR. BRZEZINSKI: Let me deal with international – international. We're stuck with the international system. It is the system created by the victors in 1945 in which there were beneficiaries and kind of tolerated participants. The beneficiaries were the victorious powers, loosely defined, and they ended up with veto rights. They're not going to give up those veto rights even though they're unreal. Why should France have a veto as compared, let's say, to Japan? The whole system of the UN, in terms of international security, is out of kilter.

So we'll have to operate more intelligently outside of it, and that means movement towards some sort of semi-formal process in which there's a larger number of participants with whom we engage actively – most intimately with Europe – increasingly so with China, hopefully also with Russia, perhaps with India and a few others, maybe a G-14 or something like that, G-16. You can have different combinations of countries, and use that as a structure in which we try collectively to engage to deal with this new global reality that is so difficult to define in black and white categories – and it shouldn't be – and which is so dynamic and so interwoven.

MR. ROEMER: And you mentioned that you wanted to give up on the UN or work out – how do you reform the UN?

MR. BRZEZINSKI: No, the UN does a lot of good things, particularly in the functional areas. In the functional areas, be it health or agriculture, conceivably ecology and so forth, it does very good work. It's on the basic fundamental problems of the structure, cohesion and stability of the world system that the UN is basically paralyzed.

MR. ROEMER: Brent, Zbig has said, both on the domestic side and the international side, we have real challenges. Everybody is talking about Abraham Lincoln these days. I think it was Lincoln who once said, with public opinion, you can do anything; without it, you can do nothing.

How does a President-elect Obama try to bring the public along on issues such as Iraq, Pakistan, China, Russia, inform people about why globalization means they have to know more about the world and he needs support for a foreign policy that he's going to actively engage in. How would you advise the president to take that on?

GEN. SCOWCROFT: I think he's uniquely equipped to do it, both by temperament and by his skill and articulateness. He gives policy addresses. He can give a little explanation. Why are we doing this? Not just get your American flag up and wave it, but what is involved? If he added five minutes to every speech talking about the framework in which his decision was made, it would make a huge difference. Then, more deeply, our whole educational system is in desperate need of repair.

On the UN, it was built for a world that doesn't exist, but fortunately, in a globalized world, there's never been a greater need for international organization. I think the UN can be reformed. Indeed, Kofi Annan tried it just before he left office and he had

a bunch of reforms which were very useful. And unfortunately, the United States, just before he issued it formally, submitted over 700 amendments to it. I mean, the objective was obvious. So I think we can do a lot.

G-something, G-14s and 20 and so on are effective for leadership, but you've got to give everybody a sense of participation, a voice, so that they don't feel the only way they can get attention is to explode something or to revolt. It's another of the grave problems we have. How do we adjust these institutions, which no longer serve the right purposes?

The Bretton Wood institutions are another one which we're just beginning to look at. They were laid out in 1944 when capital flows were insignificant to what they are today, for example.

We need to tackle all of these things. It's an awesome task, but I think I'm optimistic at this particular point that we're facing it with a greater sense of realization than we ever have before.

MR. ROEMER: Let's get into some of these domestic organizations. Zbigniew didn't want to answer DOD or CIA. Let's try to deal with NSC, where you both have a little experience. I think when you both worked there, the entire staff equaled what, 35, 50? How many people did you have?

MR. BRZEZINSKI: When I started, 35 crept up to 50, I think it was.

GEN. SCOWCROFT: I fought hard to keep it under 50 professionals.

MR. ROEMER: So the president-elect has just picked retired General Jim Jones as his NSC adviser. Is that a good pick? How big should that NSC be? I think they're talking about six or seven deputies today and a staff of 110 or 120 people. Should you combine the National Security Council and the Homeland Security Council? Give us some advice on what that National Security Council might look like. What's the 100-day plan to an Obama administration for the NSC? Do you want to start, Zbig?

MR. BRZEZINSKI: Well, I personally would favor reducing, first of all, the staff because it seems to me, you have staff that big, you're in effect running a kind of mini-bureaucracy. You either don't run it, you have no contact with most of its members, or you are preoccupied essentially with the bureaucratic operation, which duplicates, in many respects, what is being done in the other agencies.

I don't think the NSC should be an operating institution. It should be an institution that develops options for the president, that helps the president make choices, that supervises implementation and ensures that it takes place, and strategizes, and I don't think you can do it with staff that large. I don't think it's constructive to have a staff in which you have, as you said, national security adviser, seven deputies, all of them special

assistants to the president. That's the size of the group that McGeorge Bundy had as a total when he was advising Kennedy and Johnson.

Then there are 32 country directors, senior country directors, 27 of whom are also special assistants to the president. This is like some of those banks that went bankrupt, in which every teller was a vice president. (Laughter.) And then, there's about 70 staffers. I think it's way too large. I would really think General Jones would do himself well to cut the size down.

The other point on that – and then let Brent comment – I think we need to have in the White House a serious strategizing organ, a planning organ. We don't really have that. I don't think the State Department can plan foreign policy; I don't think defense can plan foreign policy. It has to be done from the White House. And I think General Jones, because of his manager background, I think is particularly suited to take the initiative in developing something meaningful in that respect.

Now, my last point is simply this. The president, to some extent, runs the risk of outsourcing foreign policy to the secretary of state, who has her own views, which are not entirely the same as his, and to Secretary Gates, who will be dealing with the legacies of the previous administration's policies.

The only way to avoid that is to have a president and a national security adviser who work very closely together, and that impose a strategic direction on the whole process, so that in fact, the secretary of state and the secretary of defense really does things consistent with the president's defined strategy. If not, I think we may end up having real disjunctions.

MR. ROEMER: So is Jones the right guy for the job, Brent? Is this the guy that can coordinate this across government and knock heads and get things done, and has the rank to have state, defense do what the president wants to have done?

GEN. SCOWCROFT: I think he is. I'm very pleased with him. I know him fairly well, and I think he's got the right temperament. You mentioned rank. I think that's the least important because, in fact, the national security adviser is junior to all the members of the National Security Council. It's not his rank; it's not the hat he puts on. It's is he speaking for the president?

MR. ROEMER: Precisely.

GEN. SCOWCROFT: And that goes back to Zbig's point. The president and the national security adviser have to work very closely together, so that the rest of the government knows when the national security adviser speaks, he's speaking for the president. And that's – this is all people at the top. It's all people and how they interact.

I think that if we have a deficit, it is in strategy, and I'll give you an example. I don't think after the Cold War, we ever really sat down as a government and said, here's

a Soviet Union which has disappeared. There's Russia, historic Russia. What are we to try to do? Comprehensively, Russia has been liberated from its history. What are we to do comprehensively to try to work Russia into it? We never really did that. We tried this, we tried that, and as a consequence recently, we've had real problems.

Those are the kinds of things that the NSC system can do, and it is true, the State Department and the defense department, as departments, have points of view, if you will, and the State Department's general point of view is really sort of conveying U.S. policy and also interpreting other countries to the United States. And so they see all the complexities, so they're prepared to discuss and not make decisions. The defense department is used to military. You have to make decisions based on incomplete information, so they're ready to move.

These are the tendencies, and the reason we have an NSC system is to bring these together and meld them, so that the president gets to look comprehensively at the problem. And if you turn the NSC into doing the work of the departments themselves, which is always a tendency, because working with the departments is frustrating, getting them to do what you think they need to do. So the tendency is, well, we'll just do it ourselves, and that's what's happened and that's why we have seven deputies now. We ought to get back to doing what only the NSC can do, which is extend the president's thinking to how to make the government work.

MR. ROEMER: When we talk about planning and extending that thinking, one of the first things that the American people are wondering about these days is Iraq. You wrote an op-ed piece, Brent, that was in the *Wall Street Journal* entitled "Don't Attack Saddam." And I think, as a national security adviser, you were probably thinking through, after Afghanistan, after we had NATO come together unanimously, coalesce behind endorsing Article Five, and saying, we're with the United States on Afghanistan, we didn't have that universal support going into Iraq, and maybe we didn't have a plan for what would happen next in Iraq.

Explain to us why you had this hesitation about going into Iraq back then, and what do we do about winning Iraq today?

GEN. SCOWCROFT: There were a couple of reasons. First of all, I thought that 9/11 had very little to do with Iraq, that Saddam was effectively contained. Was he a nasty guy? Did he have ambitions at least to dominate the region? Absolutely. But he was pretty well contained, as our quick victory over his armed forces demonstrated. So he was not a major part of the problem.

Secondly, having lived through the first Gulf War, and analyzing how far do we go, I thought we don't know how to solve Iraq as a problem. It was easy to destroy his military. What do you do with Iraq? And now, it has taken us five years to figure out what to do with Iraq and that's the other major part of the problem.

Now, I would say having made what I thought then was a mistake going in, we should not make the same mistake going out. To me, we shouldn't go out based on a calendar, but on an Iraq which we are as confident as one can be about things like this, an Iraq which is an influence for stability in the region, not for chaos and conflict, because the manner in which we get out could be as important as the manner in which we get in.

MR. ROEMER: I'm curious, when you were part of the first Bush administration and advising the president on the Kuwait invasion, was there a debate about going into Iraq and Baghdad and removing Saddam? And was the argument against that from you saying, no, once you go in there, we don't have a plan to fix it and rebuild it and Saddam is not the threat that we think others think he is?

GEN. SCOWCROFT: I remember writing a little note to the president saying, we could go on to Baghdad – simple, no problem at all. We would then be occupiers in a hostile land. Our troops would be sniped at by people who didn't want us there, and we had no strategy for getting out. There were a lot of other reasons we didn't go for – yes, we had that debate. There was no serious dissent from the notion we've accomplished our mission for a variety of reasons. Stop there.

MR. ROEMER: Stop there. Zbig, you wrote an article. I think it was called "If We Must Fight" with regard to Iraq. Tell us what you kind of talked about in that op-ed piece in the *Washington Post* and update it to today as to what we need to do with respect to Iraq.

MR. BRZEZINSKI: Well, actually, the updating would be with respect to Iran, rather than to Iraq and the basic point was not dissimilar from what Brent said in his piece. And my point was that if, in fact, there is evidence that he has weapons of mass destruction, and that he's in defiance of the UN and so forth, all things that I was skeptical about – and I felt there was no need to rush until we knew for sure.

But if, in fact, that was the case, if we must fight, we should do it only if the international community goes in with us – pretty much like what Bush I and Brent did with respect to the war over Kuwait. They had this large coalition including quite a few Arab countries in it.

So my point was, and the purpose of the article was also, to delay. If we're going to fight, let's do it in a way that has international consensus and not leaves us alone. And I think that argument, incidentally, is pertinent less to the situation in Iraq today, where I have a somewhat different view than Brent; namely, that a target date is okay. A target date is not a commitment, but a target date for disengagement helps to define priorities, gets others more engaged in thinking what happens after we leave. It permits us to talk to some of the neighbors about the implications of our departure and so forth.

But the formula, if we must fight, that I developed in the article, in my judgment, is pertinent to Iran; namely, if, at some point – which I think would be most undesirable and potentially disastrous – in fact military action was necessary, it should only be

undertaken if there is an international consensus. That is to say, not only an international consensus, you Americans go ahead and do it; you Americans go ahead and pay the price for it. But, okay, if there is international consensus, others participate, even if nominally, but still participate, and that means the Europeans, it means the Russians, it means the Chinese.

Now, that may be setting the standard too high, and in fact, I don't think that's even likely to happen, but only under those circumstances, I think that we should do something on our own, because if we do it, I think if we do it alone, we're going to pay a much larger price than the price we have already paid for Iraq.

And we will, at the same time, vastly complicate the very tenuous situations that prevail currently, both in Iraq and in Afghanistan, while plunging the Persian Gulf and the region into renewed violence and generating consequences for the international economy, in particular regarding the price of oil, which are altogether unpredictable and potentially disastrous.

So I think one of the lessons that we should be deriving from our experience in Iraq is that there are certain things that even as powerful a country as the United States should not do so. Yes, if we were attacked by someone, then, of course, we have no choice but to respond, but the notion that we can solve some complex regional issues by launching solitary military operations in the age of global political awakening, where we're dealing with masses of people that resist us, is not something that we should embark on alone.

MR. ROEMER: We're going to move now to a couple of different countries and then we'll quickly move into a question-and-answer period from the audience.

Brent, on Iran, do we live with the Iranians getting a bomb? Do we bomb to prevent it? This is probably the issue that's got the shortest timeline for the new administration coming in to deal with.

GEN. SCOWCROFT: I don't think we have to make that decision yet because I don't think we've done everything we need to do to figure out what the end result will be. I believe we have to engage in Iran. There are two issues with Iran. There's Iran in the region, including Iraq and what it thinks about Iran, and there's an Iran with nuclear weapons, the nuclear issue.

I think Iran in the region, we ought to have a serious discussion. It's a dangerous region for Iran. It's a Shi'a state in a Sunni area. It's a Persian culture in an Arab world. They do have security problems. How does it look to them? Can we construct a regional security system in which Iran feels comfortable because clearly, one of the motivations for nuclear weapons is that.

On the nuclear side, we have set preconditions for discussing this issue with them and there are not preconditions that we would agree to on our side. You give up most of

your leverage and then we'll sit down and talk with you. But I think none of the permanent five-plus-one, which is the negotiating team negotiating with Iran, none of them want Iran to have nuclear weapons, but they all have different other areas of interest. And as long as we're the bad guys, they can go ahead and be the good guys because we won't let it happen.

I think if we can seriously sit down and discuss with them to the point that we have an actual, solid phalanx of these six telling Iran, no, don't go this route; we will promise you, if you want nuclear power, we will facilitate it. We will make the raw materials, that is nuclear energy or nuclear fuel, available at a price you can begin, that's the test. Then if they reject that, then you've got a different world to confront them on.

MR. ROEMER: That's leverage.

GEN. SCOWCROFT: I think we're not there yet, but time is running out.

MR. ROEMER: Brent talks about regional approach to Iran, Zbig. What about a regional approach, or international approach, to Pakistan. Given the Mumbai attacks, given how volatile the situation is between Pakistan and India, what options does the next administration have for dealing with peace in this region between these two rivals?

GEN. SCOWCROFT: I can hardly wait for the answer to that. (Laughter.)

MR. ROEMER: We're just entering the lightning round here, Zbig, where you've got to limit your answers to four or five paragraphs or sentences. We're going to move to Russia and China and then open it up.

MR. BRZEZINSKI: Who would be in that regional response though, that's the question that comes to my mind – I mean, regional response from whom? And for one thing, the Chinese are certainly (not?) going to be a part of any American-Indian gang-up on Pakistan, so I'm not sure they will be particularly enthralled by the prospect. And the Russians don't even have a border with Pakistan, and so how would they participate?

I think the best we can do is to try, first of all, whatever we can to dissuade the Pakistanis and the Indians from a direct collision, and secondly, pressure the Pakistanis to really dismantle some of the networks that operate in Pakistan against India. Thirdly, press the Indians to be a little more responsive on the Kashmir issue, which is a major unresolved legacy of the partition, more than 50 years ago; and then, fourth, ourselves, try not to engage in military actions that increasingly mobilize Pakistani public opinion against us.

And while I don't exclude some very selective strikes in Pakistani territory are extraordinarily valuable targets; namely, senior al Qaeda operatives, Osama bin Laden – hopefully himself – but only in conditions to which we know the Pakistanis won't act, namely then we are doing it in self-defense.

But these attacks on the Mujahedeen who killed some local guy and in the process, killed a lot of other Pakistanis, is a way of simply destabilizing Pakistan step-by-step and creating a very volatile country, emotionally very intense – really not yet a fully grown state – into a country which is going to become increasingly an extension of the war in Afghanistan.

And the vehicle for that, of course, is the fact that the Pashtuns are such an important part both of Afghanistan and Pakistan, and much of that fighting is in the Pashtun area. So the borderline, in many respects, is essentially an artificial line on the map, but it divides villages, families and so forth. So that's the best I can come up with. (Laughter.) Do you have better ideas, Brent?

MR. ROEMER: Do you have any additional ideas to this?

GEN. SCOWCROFT: No, I don't. I think Pakistan could well be the most vexing problem we face now. It's extremely difficult. I think we could cooperate with China on Pakistan as we have over the past decades, but you can't bring India into that one. The Russians still have less than tender feelings about Pakistan and the role they played while the Russians were occupying Afghanistan.

So it's very difficult to think of a negotiating coalition on this issue. I don't want to repeat what has been said, but it is really a complex issue. It's a very, very weak government and they have huge internal problems, in addition to the Afghan-Pakistani problem.

MR. ROEMER: Well, I'd be tempted to ask you some questions about the army in Pakistan and Kayani, but let's move to China, and then maybe we'll end back on a domestic issue.

How do we engage China and bring them peacefully into the international system, business, trade issues, but also recognize some of the military issues that their growing military, their human rights issues, their relationship with Taiwan – how do we work with the Chinese in the future?

GEN. SCOWCROFT: Well, you've outlined a whole new conference. But I think, and I would say if there's one area over the past 30 years or so where the United States has done well, it is with respect to China. Since Nixon went there in 1972, we have had a variety of different administrations, different presidents of different parties and so on. All have come in the end to a common view that a strengthening and deepening relationship with China is in the U.S. national interest and I think broadly, we have done extremely well. I don't see any reason that cannot continue.

Certainly, Taiwan is the most likely area for confrontation. Neither the United States wants one over Taiwan, nor does China. Taiwan is kind of a loose card, but now with a new election, that's it.

So I feel quite good about the future with China. We have – economically the relationship has developed from zero to a very deep relationship and we are deeply each other's hostages on economic relations. We don't always realize that, and there's a possibility, especially with the crisis, that we'll turn protectionist, and we will start attacking Chinese trade, and so on. I think that's probably manageable.

MR. ROEMER: I'm going to get a little tougher on your question here. You won't get the easy general one that I gave to Brent. We have a financial crisis here. China is increasingly experiencing unemployment, the closure of factories, difficulties on the home front. If there's domestic upheaval in China – which presents a problem and a challenge for them – if they don't continue to get the 7 percent growth that they need in the economy, how does that confront us with deeper challenges? What do we do?

MR. BRZEZINSKI: Well, it confronts us with a very unpleasant reality. The most likely description of that reality is that China will then react in a more authoritarian fashion which, of course, is going to be very bad for its perception in the United States. It may aggravate some of the differences that we have with the Chinese on the human rights issue, but in the final analysis, there's only so much we can do about that aspect anyway. And a China that slides into chaos is certainly not a China that's in our interest.

And so, if that eventuality arises, I think the emotional and moral implications will be unpleasant for us, but as a practical reality, what would be of the greatest importance to us is that this kind of strange equilibrium that exists between them and us, with us heavily indebted, with them heavily invested in us, is maintained.

That's the basic reality that we cannot ignore, except at a very high cost to ourselves and to them, if that equilibrium changes into disequilibrium or collision. Punitive legislation in the United States of some sort is self-damaging, pull-out from the American financial market by the Chinese, et cetera and that's not a solution that benefits anybody.

MR. ROEMER: Toward the end of the book, there's a fascinating story that you tell. I don't know if you've told it before in your memoirs, or if this was the first time you told it in America and the world, but you talk about your relationship with President Carter. And I think David Ignatius asked you a question about how did you get along with this guy, and did you ever have a run-in with him? What was the temperament between the two of you? And you tell a great story of the president dropping off a note, sending a note to you. Tell us that story.

MR. BRZEZINSKI: After that buildup, the story is going to be a letdown. (Laughter.) It was something very specific; namely, how does the national security adviser – I think it was germane to that. How does the national security adviser, so to speak, contribute to the president being confronted with the real world, and not with the world of the White House, where inevitably, the vast majority of players there flatter him endlessly – flatter him endlessly? It's very real in that setting to lose a sense of reality and become convinced that one is infallible, et cetera, et cetera.

And I was simply saying that I knew the president well. Brent knew his president very well and it's one of my jobs telling him things he didn't like to hear, occasionally criticizing what he did, although I will only do that one-on-one, or bugging him about some issues. And what I found very rewarding in my relationship with him was that, by and large, he helped me do it, although I did find after about one year in the White House, that what I did in the first year very spontaneously – it was just natural to me to tell him that, what he didn't like to hear.

After one year or so, I had to tell myself to do it, but I kept doing it and he took it, generally speaking. I said on one occasion, when he really, I guess, thought it was too much, but this is what then happened. His secretary walked into my office and very ceremoniously, plunked an envelope in front of me on my desk. I looked at the envelope and it was the green stationery, which is the president's stationery, and I recognized his handwriting because he has very distinctive handwriting. And on the envelope, it said, Zbig. So I opened it up.

MR. ROEMER: And she's still standing there, right?

MR. BRZEZINSKI: She's still standing there. And I looked at it, and all it said inside is, Zbig, don't you ever know when to stop? J.C. (Laughter.) And I know it was meant by him to be a reproach, but I really liked it. (Laughter.) I thought this was a very genteel and nice way on his part to do it and I think what it really meant ultimately, was that maybe on one particular case, I bugged him just once too often, but that he realized that what I was doing was something he needed, and that he needed someone who had either the sense of personal closeness to him, or self-confidence or a combination of both really, that he felt I ought to do it as part of my job.

MR. ROEMER: It's a great story. Brent, last question. Presidents have a tradition of leaving a letter on the desk in the Oval Office for the incoming president which is highly private. If you were to leave a letter for Jim Jones as the next national security adviser. And obviously, with this camera here, this is not highly private. What would your advice be to him? What are two or three priorities?

GEN. SCOWCROFT: That's easy – don't screw up. (Laughter.) But seriously, and as Zbig pointed out in spades, the most important thing you can do, and the most difficult, is to tell the president what you think he needs to know, not what you think he wants to hear, and that is so hard.

Now, frequently, you have to do it one-on-one, but I used to sit in my office and people would come in to see the president and come in my office. First of all, they're waiting to see him and they say, boy, I'm really going to tell the president he has just screwed up on this terribly. I'm really going to tell him. They walk through the door into the Oval Office and they just melt. (Laughter.)

It is awfully hard to confront a president. It's just really hard, but if you don't do it, you're not serving your country; you're not serving him. He needs to know that, and each president, you need to do it in a different way. That is, by all odds, the most important thing that the national security adviser can do.

MR. BRZEZINSKI: Let me just add a footnote to what Brent said. I think that's going to be one of the problems that General Jones is going to have because what Brent mentioned, and what I talked about, to some extent, may have been peculiar to a very special relationship that both Brent and I had with our respective presidents.

MR. ROEMER: You knew them?

MR. BRZEZINSKI: We happened to know them well; they happened to know us well. They obviously found us sufficiently congenial to have us close to them as people who can walk into their office unannounced without an appointment, stick our head in the Oval Office and so forth. That requires a personal relationship.

I hope Jones will have that with the president. I am not in any way taking anything away from him, but the fact is, they don't know each other that well, and I hope it will be consciously developed because the president certainly needs that. You have no idea the extent to which the White House is like a royal court, with a lot of courtiers just sucking up to the president. (Laughter.)

MR. ROEMER: Tell him the truth? All right.

Well, please join me in thanking General Scowcroft, Dr. Brzezinski, for a great presentation. (Applause.)

(END)