



UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE AND THE RICHARD NIXON FOUNDATION

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A Conversation with Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski

Introduction by Ambassador Stapleton Roy

Moderated by Margaret Warner, PBS NewsHour

AMBASSADOR ROY: Our next panel offers a marvelous opportunity to hear one of the major practitioners of foreign policies at the period that we're commemorating - the 1970's, the period from Nixon's visit to China, through the normalization of diplomatic relations - to have his reflections on events at that time. Margaret Warner, who is the moderator, I think is well known to all of you as a PBS personality, and of course Dr. Brzezinski was the National Security Advisor for President Carter and played a very major role in the conclusion of the process that was started by President Nixon in 1972.

MARGARET WARNER: Thank you very much, Ambassador Roy. Let's see if our mikes are hot. That was being very brief and I'm going to be equally brief just to say that we had a fascinating deep dive into the Nixon visit to China in 1972, and as Ambassador Roy said, there was a very important second chapter which was the completion of normalization that President Carter achieved in 1978. And a critical player in all that, on the inside and also on the outside, was Dr. Brzezinski, Zbigniew Brzezinski, who was the National Security Advisor at the time. Dr. Brzezinski, tell us what we need to know about that critical second step.

ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI: Thank you, Margaret, ladies and gentlemen. I'm going to take a few seconds to respond more generally than we can have an exchange of views. First of all, let me say that I'm delighted to be here today to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the really historic opening to China which was undertaken with such great political courage by President Nixon and was initiated with such masterful skill by my long years standing friend, all the way back to student days at Harvard, namely Henry Kissinger.

And I'm also very happy that I can in this way reciprocate Henry's participation four years ago in Beijing which was held to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the successful implemented decision by President Carter to establish normal diplomatic relations with China and even to engage in not so altogether secret strategic operation with China. The first Nixon-Kissinger initiative produced a historically important strategic reorientation on the world's scene between the United States and China.

The second, four years later, produced an international realignment on the global scene between the United States and China. The first one has been rightly called "the six days that's changed the world". The second one can be called "the six months that subsequently changed the world". The second couldn't have happened without the first. But it is also true that the second was necessary because if it hadn't happened it wouldn't have happened for months and years.

It is important to recall that President Nixon was forced out of office, some of the momentum was lost, and within the Republican Party there was a growing campaign directed particularly at Henry notwithstanding his remarkable historical achievement.

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In 1976, Vice President Nelson Rockefeller, who was closely associated with Henry, was forced out of office. And in 1980, at the Republican Convention, a great deal of conservative opposition within the Republicans to Henry's policies and to Ford's initiative surfaced, occasionally even in somewhat unpleasant circumstances. Thus what Carter did four years after Henry's initiative was probably the only moment of time when something significant could be undertaken to consummate the strategic reorientation in order to shape a strategic realignment.

We also have to be conscious of the fact that at that time - that is to say after the forcing out of Nixon and until the decision by Carter to move overtly- the Chinese themselves were becoming increasingly suspicious as to the interdynamics of the triangular relationship that emerged out of the initial Nixon-Kissinger initiative. I won't bore you with all of the citations, but let me just cite a couple to you, one from [PH 00:06:43] Deng Xiaoping in his conversations with me. He was talking of the Soviet Union and he said, "I think it is using China as a pawn in order to gain more things from the United States. It is designed to hoodwink the people of the world." And from another one from the actual head of the Chinese government at the time, Hua Guofeng, he said the following: "In our argument with Dr. Henry Kissinger we said to him, "You should not, the United States should not go to Moscow on the shoulders of China". The Chinese were profoundly suspicious that in this triangular game they were being used. Alternately by the Soviets and by us. And that, of course, maximized their suspicions also of us.

When the President sent me to China he gave me written instructions - which are actually attached to the memoirs of my book, and which I confess were written by me and by Mike Oksenberg who played a very important role in this entire enterprise - but he gave me two oral instructions which were germane. He said very directly to me, "Don't overplay the anti-Soviet hand". And he also said to me, "Don't flatter the Chinese". He actually put it a little more formal for me, "Don't kiss their ass". I have to say that when it came to the second, I had no difficulty in implementing his instructions. People who know me know that this is not my style. With respect to the first, I did have some difficulties but in the process of adjusting to the tone of the discussions, the Chinese helped me. So in that sense, that particular instruction became somewhat moot.

The conversations with Deng were very direct. As I read the transcripts of the Nixon- Mao Kissinger-Mao and Zhou Enlai discussions they occasionally were more analytical, you could sense that there was a probing. With Deng it was much more direct. Sometimes some were sarcastic on his side, or provocative, to "smoke out" perhaps, our position. But, in the course of these discussions I have to say that in a strange sort of a way a kind of a personal bond developed between us. I actually began to like him in addition to respect him.

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In fact, I think in terms of my lifetime he was one of the two most impressive political people I ever met. And he seemed to be responsive to me in a somewhat personal fashion characterized by two incidents which in a way illustrated. One, he and his wife came, on the first day in America on a state visit, to a totally private dinner with my family, both of them came. Secondly, after I left office in '81 he invited me, my wife and my three children to be his guests in China for about ten days and that was absolutely memorable.

Nonetheless, in conversations with me he frequently carved and probed. For example, when I told him that the United States has now decided to move forward on normalization, after an earlier visit by Secretary Vance which left things somewhat in a maze, he on several occasions rather, I thought, sardonically said to me, "Well, if President Carter has made up his mind". So much so, that on the third occasion I actually snapped and I said to him, "Look, I've told you a couple of times already, President Carter has made up his mind. If we're serious about it, let's start secret negotiations next month". And that got his attention. And I also said to him the secret negotiations would be conducted in Beijing by our extremely able Ambassador Woodcock and back in Washington by the White House. And he then responded to that.

Nonetheless, he still kept probing. In keeping with the previously noted by me suspicion that we may be playing a game in which the Soviets were playing a game with both of us using China. He said to me a couple of times something to the effect are you fearful of the Soviets? For example, after denouncing the Vladivostok Agreement which Henry and Ford discussed with Brezhnev, which wasn't consummated, he denounced as in his view an excessive concession by the United States. I repeat, his view. He then turned to me and said, "Perhaps", and I'm quoting now, "Perhaps I think you have the fear of offending the Soviet Union. Is that right?" Well, that really annoyed me. So I said to him, and I quote, "I can assure you that my inclination to be fearful of offending the Soviet Union is rather limited. Indeed, I would be willing to make a little bet with you as to who is less popular in the Soviet Union, you or me". He was rather surprised by that and said, "It is hard to say". And of course I was referring to the fact that the Soviets were waging this war on me personally as responsible for difficulties in American-Soviet relations.

I also told him, and I quote, "I honestly do not think it is useful for you to criticize us as appeasing the Soviets". And then I went on to say that, "For thirty years we have opposed the Soviets while you were collaborating with them. And now you still sign agreements with them and we're not accusing you of manipulating us". In these discussions, as they went on, it increasingly became also evident that the Chinese wanted some overt demonstration of our commitment and reassurance that we are not playing the triangular game. And that assurance, interestingly enough, was actually a question of words the Chinese wanted us to use as a form of litmus test, namely a commitment to "Anti-hegemony opposition", which was their favorite phrase. In the U.S. Government there was some disagreement whether to use it, but in the written instruction which I was given, it was written and signed by the President that we were committed to a posture of Anti-hegemony.

So I interpreted that as consistent with the general instructions I got from the President and then I told him that we're quite prepared to use that phrase.

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And not only that, but I will help to get the Japanese to use it. And on my way home I stopped in Tokyo and I had a meeting with Prime Minister Fukuda. They was concerned as to whether to use that phrase because they knew of our earlier reticence to using it.

And I could tell them right there that we will use it and I could tell Prime Minister Fukuda that from our standpoint we were open to using it and therefore they should go ahead as well, and they did. Of course the difficult points were the questions pertaining to Taiwan itself. And there we explicitly said we now except the three conditions about no diplomatic relations, full normalization and question of arm sales would have –

The phrase I kept using repeatedly was, “You are in the historically transitional phase when that issue is resolved by the Chinese themselves in keeping with the Nixon-Kissinger approach. We will [INDISCERNIBLE], but we’ll adjust it in the spirit that is in conformity with the historically transitional phase during which the Chinese themselves work it out. So we agreed, after prolonged sparring that we will express the hope that this issue will be resolved in this way, reserving the right of sale but it is not a condition that the Chinese must abide by, they can state their own position. And that is the way it worked out.

Unfortunately, there was a real snafu here. On the very day the normalization was to be announced and the consequence of the negotiations had continued for about six months on the details and specifics, it became apparent that Deng was operating on the assumption, or was pretending to be operating on the assumption that arms sales with Taiwan will be discontinued immediately, and during the one year from which the defense treaty with Taiwan would expire, and will then continue to be suspended after that. Whereas our position, as we negotiated with the Chinese was it would be suspended during that year but to continue afterwards in keeping with the historically transitional phase, meaning depending on circumstances. We got word from Woodcock in Beijing that Deng is assuming discontinuation and our Ambassador were not going to reopen that with a communiqué ready to go that evening.

So I sent a cable to Woodcock saying, “No, you have to back in and clarify that. Because it will be worse if after the issue is communiqué there was a breakdown. It’s better to have a breakdown and postpone the communiqué, which we could do just like that, or let’s work this out.” Deng was concerned, and according to Woodcock shocked - it may have been genuine, it may have been an act – but when it became clear to him, then there was no deal. We can either postpone the announcement or we go with it in which we say, in effect, that this is not discontinued after one year. He decided to prolong it. In effect, agreeing to disagree without the issue surfacing. And that’s how it worked out, and of course we do know things have changed in the relationship between Taiwan and China, but that was the critical moment.

The result of this, in effect, was a new strategic alignment characterized 1) by normal diplomatic relations, 2) not generally known, by the initiation and endurance of critically important intelligence cooperation with China, directed - at I think we all know by who - without it being said, 3) strategic cooperation shortly thereafter regarding such difficult issues as Vietnam and Cambodia in which the Chinese had been given us warning in advance, here in Washington

when Deng came here, staged a limited military operation against Vietnam and we gave them international protection by sponsoring resolutions in the U.N. designed to call upon the Chinese to discontinue-

[AUDIO GAP 00:20:11 - 00:20:20]

- they wouldn't do. And that's prevented us to be against unilateralism and the use of military power but in a larger strategic context in which the other side you get amazed, back by the Soviets were expected to be the same. Fourth, subsequently within a year it involved joint efforts, literally joint efforts, joint military efforts, to oppose the Soviets in Afghanistan. That is still part of history but it's the part of history even though it is not all that well known. Fifth, it resulted in trade and scientific and educational cooperation rapidly blossoming. Sixth, we have continued arms sales to Taiwan but in a context in which Taiwan and China are moving to closer relations. Literally hundreds of thousands of people go back and forth. Major families invest in Shanghai. The retirement area for rich Taiwanese businessmen around Shanghai. Growing closer together and as circumstances change, that presumably will continue.

And then eventually when I visited China as Deng Xiaoping's guest he used my presence, in fact, photographically demonstrated when Renmin Ribao announced his new formula for Taiwan with me and him being there together when he did it, namely the "One China, two systems" formula, one China, part of the Nixon-Kissinger communique but two systems. But in fact, it is not just two, there's one system for China, one for Hong Kong already, one for China and Macao. And hence, I rather expect this will evolve over time into one China, several systems.

The distinctive aspect would be, eventually, no PLA forces on Taiwan itself within one state formula which eventually will evolve. I think this means an important change in the relationship and it meant that at the time. It also facilitated something which is not connected directly usually, but which Mike Oksenberg - who really helped make and shape me on this issue - warned me about. Namely, this now facilitates Deng's decision to launch an economic transformation to shift away from the state controlled economic system to wide ranging reform based on international trade - including particularly with the United States - which transformed the China we are seeing.

It is now essential, therefore, to make certain that this strategic reorientation that then lead to the strategic realignment continues in the direction of an enduring Chinese-American, American-Chinese partnership. In different ways, Henry has talked about it, I have talked about it. I think we have to be careful to nurture this because they are precious to push us into confrontation. There is a growing tendency towards demonization of us by them, of them by us. I have to confess, I felt uncomfortable at the state luncheon for our Vice President Xi which took the following form: we all waited for about two hours for the first course to be set from 12:30 to 2:25 PM. I timed it because after having soup I got up and left because I have other things I have to go and do, while I listened to a long welcome, very generous, by the Secretary of State, then translated into Chinese which takes 1.5 more time, then an even lengthier statement by the Vice President, also translated into Chinese at a ratio of time 1.5 Chinese to English, which involved, largely, a series of complaints about Chinese conduct, which the Chinese Vice President had to stand and listen to.

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Following which he then made his previously prepared response, not responding to that. I don't think we probably would have appreciated if Vice President Biden, on a state visit to China was exposed to that kind of welcome. We have to be careful.

But this is not only a matter of words this is also a matter of concrete issues. In my just published book, which deals in part with the American-Chinese relationship, but not exclusively, called *Strategic Vision*, I argue that in the American-Chinese relationship we have to address three very serious strategic, tangible issues: 1) the scope of our ongoing air and naval controls right up to Chinese territorial waters. We're conducting this, there are risks involved in this. The Chinese sent out aircraft to monitor our aircraft. They come awfully close to ours. There could be incidents. I don't think we would be happy if the Chinese were conducting such air patrols and naval patrols next to let's say, San Diego.

The second is military build-up. The Chinese will have a significant military build-up in years to come. Next year they're planning to spend close to \$100 billion on military capability. That's still considerably smaller than ours. It's much larger than any other country in the world. We have to have serious strategic talks regarding that issue so that we don't get into an increasing future suspicion regarding our respective intentions. And last but not least, at some point in the course of the next decade I think we'll have to address, maybe not directly but indirectly, the issue of Taiwan. That's not going to wait indefinitely as China becomes more important and more assertive in the Far East. That issue will have to be faced hopefully by indirection. The best outcome will be for the Chinese to work this out themselves within the framework of their original Nixon-Kissinger committee and as a modified by what was done by Carter. I think we have to be realistic about this, and patient, but also sensitive to the meaning of this issue to the Chinese but that does involve an issue of national integrity and self-definition.

In brief, we're going to be tested in the years to come and just as Nixon and Kissinger, and then subsequently Carter and to some extent myself, so to in the years to come there will be yet another moment in which an important American response to these issues will be needed. But that is all to the good if we approach it with a strategic perspective. Thank you.

MARGARET WARNER: Thank you, Dr. Kissinger. We're going to go questions from the audience. I mean, Dr. Brzezinski. Oh, what a terrible faux-pas. I'm looking right at Henry right now. I'm going to ask you a couple of quick questions but then we're going to the audience.

Let me just ask you this, in your book and all the other books on this, even though you said China was very concerned we were playing a double game vis-a-vis the Soviet Union, in fact, the perception as you describe it, of the Soviet threat was very much an animating principle, was it not, for both the United States and for China in pursuing this?

ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI: Oh yes, you're absolutely right. Although in all fairness I have to say that during the first year in the Carter Administration, there was some significant differences of opinion on the subject and at very high levels. There was a different school of thought which

tended to by and large minimize the Soviet problem and was a little skeptical about moving the way we did move and more in keeping with what was started by the Nixon-Kissinger.

MARGARET WARNER: But both for the Chinese and for your administration, there was a perception at the time that the Soviet threat was quite great and that this would be a useful countermove.

ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI: Yes, you are quite right. But I do say that in the first year of our administration this was not a universal position and the President himself tended initially to have perhaps more optimistic expectations regarding the possibility of a more comprehensive arms control arrangement with the Soviets than proved feasible.

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MARGARET WARNER: So that takes me to my second question which was what was the evolution of President Carter's thinking? Because in the early part of your description it sounds as if he was unsure about how quickly, how much of a priority at least this should be Vis-à-vis the priority of pursuing an arms control treaty with the Soviets.

ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI: Yes, you're absolutely right. We inherited an ongoing process which, in light of Vladivostok seemed to point to a possible solution - which the Chinese were objecting to it - had gone too far in being concessionary to the Soviets. Within our administration there were divisions of opinion on this, the President himself wanted dramatic cuts with the Soviets which then threw the Soviets off the trail, off the rail so to speak, because it went all of a sudden to a far greater extent than the earlier discussion with Nixon or the Republicans. So there was division in the administration. Secondly, the President wanted to consummate the Panama Canal issue which is politically very costly to him, but he felt he could only do it within the first year. And I think he was right in that judgment. Incidentally, that's where Obama actually missed the opportunity on the Middle Eastern peace. Because the moment to act was in the first year and not in the second as he did and then he got rebuffed. But that's merely an aside. The point is the first year is the year of opportunity for costly Presidential initiatives. So Carter wanted to consummate the Panama Canal issue. In the meantime, to accommodate with the Chinese on the basis of the status quo, which they rebuffed when Secretary Vance went there, then got in Panama, he decided to bite the bullet on the Chinese.

MARGARET WARNER: We're going to go to audience questions. Yes? Raise your hand, the lady in the pink suit there, if you just wait for the mike. Please give your name and your affiliation and your question.

HONG LIO: My name is [PH] Hong Lio and in Chinese [PH] Lio Hong. I call myself the daughter of President Nixon in Chairman Mao Zedong's era. I'm affiliated to President Nixon's Foundation. I have one request, President Nixon and Chairman Mao aided with genius think-tanks like Dr. Henry Kissinger and the doctors and the Chinese side to pave the way for peace. What we can do to help build peace? Because when I met my husband 25 years ago, he asked me, "Are you from bad China or good China?" I said, "I'm from good China, The People's Republic of China. I'm a school teacher. I'm a public school teacher". And I couldn't help tell

you, people at the bottom, students, parents, they love to know everything about the Far East to Asia and I want to contribute \$100 thousand to Nixon Foundation to build the group image of peace.

MARGARET WARNER: Thank you.

HONG LIO: Lastly, I want to apply it to the Middle East.

MARGARET WARNER: Thank you very much. Let me just take your question and follow-up with just something the Chinese Foreign Minister said in his address here. I don't know if you heard it, which is that this could be the century of a win-win cooperation between the US and China. Do you think that's realistic? What would it take? We're getting a little feedback here.

ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI: I think the United States and China face a unique opportunity which is not predetermined necessarily and for which there are no precedents, and which nonetheless I would argue makes sense in terms of fitting into the new historical circumstances in which we find ourselves. Namely, for most of known history in international politics on the global scale there was global competition for supremacy and that dominated world affairs and was a reflection of the West, the last century and three major wars the essence of which - one of which was peaceful, non-military - the essence of which was global domination. That means when two powers complete the end result is the elimination of one of the two. I don't think that lesson of history necessarily is destined to endure. In fact, I'm not sure it even corresponds to reality anymore. The world is so complex that no one power can dominate it and in that sense a struggle for hegemony between just two makes less and less sense.

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I would argue that if the United States falters the world is not going to be Chinese it's going to be chaotic. But if the United States and China can cooperate, I think we have a better chance of creating a degree of equilibrium internationally that enables all of us to benefit. That is the challenge to American and to Chinese statesmanship. But that means that both of them have to be aware of it and responsive to it and trying also to contain the almost inevitable social pressures, political pressures to exaggerate frictions, to elevate them to the point of vital national interest and to engage in a reciprocal dominization. But that is the responsibility we share in common. One side cannot [INDISCERNIBLE] with it, battle with it and resolve it on its own.

MARGARET WARNER: Next question. Yes, right there.

STEVEN SHORT: My name is Steven Short. Did Jimmy Carter as President ever visit China? And if not, why not?

ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI: He has visited quite a few times. So the rest of the question I don't have to answer.

MARGARET WARNER: Yes, right here.

RANDALL DOYLE: Hello, Dr. Brzezinski, I'm Randall Doyle, I work for the [PH] Lyle Guy Research Foundation and I'd like to ask you about human rights, and as you know, human rights is one of the fundamental pillars of President Carter's foreign policy approach. What were some of the realities you encountered dealing with China that you could only push that issue so far without maybe sacrificing an agreement that would move US-Chinese relations further down the road?

ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI: Well, you know –

MARGARET WARNER: Could people hear the question? The question had to do with human rights. I see people shaking their head. Basically, how did President Carter's emphasis on human rights - how were you able to handle that with the Chinese and to what degree did one have to give way to the other? I paraphrased.

ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI: There is no difference really, between President Carter's approach to human rights and to arms control of the Soviet Union or human rights of China and improved relations with China. That is to say both are desirable but you have to make reasonable judgment as to how much is feasible. If you think that stabilizing external relationships is a value in itself you take that into account and moderate to some extent the degree of emphasis you place on human rights. If you can have human rights without being fearful of the negative consequences of deterioration in other relationships you can press the issue more. To put it very crudely and simply if the party involved is powerful the adjustment has to be more prudent. If the party involved is weak, you can squeeze them as much as you want in order to get human rights. Obviously, Russia, the Soviet Union and China are not in the same category as some country in Latin America or elsewhere in the world where you can concentrate on human rights without worrying about the military political aspects of the relationship. Ultimately it's common sense.

MARGARET WARNER: I think we have time for just one question, and the gentleman in the back there.

JOHN SAN: John [PH] San with CTI TV of Taiwan. Dr. Brzezinski, you were talking about the three issues that the US has to discuss with China, or resolve with China, one of them is Taiwan. How do you expect the United States and China to resolve the Taiwan issue? Could you elaborate a little bit on that? There have been calls in some circles for some kind of rethinking about US arms sales to Taiwan and some even go even further about abandoning Taiwan. Thank you.

ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI: Actually, at the risk of producing some resentment or controversy I do say in my book that it is in my judgment not realistic to assume that the United States can indefinitely be the source of arms for Taiwan so that it can, because of their availability of these arms, maintain a distinctive relationship with China without that negatively affecting eventually the American-Chinese relationship.

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And that is, in my judgment, just a matter of common sense. However, I also do think that in the long run the relationship between China and Taiwan will be resolved on the basis of accommodation between the two parties depending on the scale of China's own national success which have geopolitical consequences and also depending on the degree to which China and Taiwan grow closer together by peaceful expansion of closer and closer ties creating, in effect defacto, a situation in which one China, several systems becomes reality. One China was what was acknowledged in the Nixon-Mao communique, Shanghai communique, reaffirmed by the United States subsequently. One China. But the variety of arrangements within one China is a question for the Chinese to decide not for us to decide. And I think with sensitivity we can resolve this.

I remember that when – and I'll end on this – when Deng came to dinner to my house, there was general conversation, chit chat, but sometimes there were kind of pauses. So I decided to tease him a little bit about the nature of our relations, maybe subtly, to remind him how democratic we are and how yet a long road they have to travel to reach democracy. So I said to him, “Mr. Chairman, Mr. Vice Chairman, you know when we normalize relations with you and when you normalize relations with us the President of the United States had a lot of difficulties in Congress with American public opinion”. And I would start saying to him, “We are a democracy. Did you have any difficulties in normalizing relations with us?” And just like that, Deng Xiaoping – who had a good sense of humor – answered, “Oh yes, of course we had a great deal of difficulties. There was a great deal of political opposition in the province of Taiwan”.

MARGARET WARNER: Touche. Dr. Brzezinski, thank you so much.