

Brzezinski's Warning to America. The Liberal World Order is Falling Apart. America's Unavoidable Decline

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The liberal world order, which lasted from the end of World War 2 until today, is rapidly collapsing. The center of gravity is shifting from west to east where China and India are experiencing explosive growth and where a revitalized Russia has restored its former stature as a credible global superpower. These developments, coupled with America's imperial overreach and chronic economic stagnation, have severely hampered US ability to shape events or to successfully pursue its own strategic objectives. As Washington's grip on global affairs continues to loosen and more countries reject the western development model, the current order will progressively weaken clearing the way for a multipolar world badly in need of a new security architecture. Western elites, who are unable to accept this new dynamic, continue to issue frenzied statements expressing their fear of a future in which the United States no longer dictates global policy.

At the 2019 Munich Security Conference, Chairman Wolfgang Ischinger, underscored many of these same themes. Here's an excerpt from his presentation:



“The whole liberal world order appears to be falling apart – nothing is as it once was... Not only do war and violence play a more prominent role again: a new great power confrontation looms at the horizon. In contrast to the early 1990s, liberal democracy and the principle of open markets are no longer uncontested....

In this international environment, the risk of an inter-state war between great and middle powers has clearly increased....What we had been observing in many places around the world was a dramatic increase in brinkmanship, that is, highly risky actions on the abyss – the abyss of war....

No matter where you look, there are countless conflicts and crises...the core pieces of the international order are breaking apart, without it being clear whether anyone can pick them up – or even wants to. (“Who will pick up the pieces?”, [Munich Security Conference](#))

Ischinger is not alone in his desperation nor are his feelings limited to elites and intellectuals. By now, most people are familiar with the demonstrations that have rocked Paris, the political cage-match that is tearing apart England (Brexit), the rise of anti-immigrant right-wing groups that have sprung up across Europe, and the surprising rejection of the front-runner candidate in the 2016 presidential elections in the US. Everywhere the establishment and their neoliberal policies are being rejected by the masses of working people who have only recently begun to wreak havoc on a system that has ignored them for more than 30 years. Trump’s public approval ratings have improved, not because he has “drained the swamp” as he promised, but because he is still seen as a Washington outsider despised by the political class, the foreign policy establishment and the media. His credibility rests on the fact that he is hated by the coalition of elites who working people now regard as their sworn enemy.

The president of the prestigious Council on Foreign Relations, Richard Haass, summed up his views on the “weakening of the liberal world order” in an article that appeared on the CFR’s website. Here’s what he said:



“Attempts to build global frameworks are failing. Protectionism is on the rise; the latest round of global trade talks never came to fruition.At the same time, great power rivalry is returning...

There are several reasons why all this is happening, and why now. The rise of populism is in part a response to stagnating incomes and job loss, owing mostly to new technologies but widely attributed to imports and immigrants. Nationalism is a tool increasingly used by leaders to bolster their authority, especially amid difficult economic and political conditions....

But the weakening of the liberal world order is due, more than anything else, to the changed attitude of the U.S. Under President Donald Trump, the US decided against joining the Trans-Pacific Partnership and to withdraw from the Paris climate agreement. It has threatened to leave the North American Free Trade Agreement and the Iran nuclear deal. It has unilaterally introduced steel and aluminum tariffs, relying on a justification (national security) that others could use, in the process placing the world at risk of a trade war....America First” and the liberal world order seem incompatible.” (“Liberal World Order, R.I.P.”, Richard Haass, [CFR](#))

What Haass is saying is that the cure for globalisation is more globalization, that the

greatest threat to the liberal world order is preventing the behemoth corporations from getting more of what they want; more self-aggrandizing trade agreements, more offshoring of businesses, more outsourcing of jobs, more labor arbitrage, and more privatization of public assets and critical resources. Trade liberalization is not liberalization, it does not strengthen democracy or create an environment where human rights, civil liberties and the rule of law are respected. It's a policy that focuses almost-exclusively on the free movement of capital in order to enrich wealthy shareholders and fatten the bottom line. The sporadic uprisings around the world- Brexit, yellow vests, emergent right wing groups- can all trace their roots back to these one-sided, corporate-friendly trade deals that have precipitated the steady slide in living standards, the shrinking of incomes, and the curtailing of crucial benefits for the great mass of working people across the US and Europe. President Trump is not responsible for the outbreak of populism and social unrest, he is merely an expression of the peoples rage. Trump's presidential triumph was a clear rejection of the thoroughly-rigged elitist system that continues to transfer the bulk of the nation's wealth to tiniest layer of people at the top.

Haass's critique illustrates the level of denial among elites who are now gripped by fear of an uncertain future.

As we noted earlier, the center of gravity has shifted from west to east, which is the one incontrovertible fact that cannot be denied. Washington's brief unipolar moment -following the breakup of the Soviet Union in December, 1991 — has already passed and new centers of industrial and financial power are gaining pace and gradually overtaking the US in areas that are vital to America's primacy. This rapidly changing economic environment is accompanied by widespread social discontent, seething class-based resentment, and ever-more radical forms of political expression. The liberal order is collapsing, not because the values espoused in the 60s and 70s have lost their appeal, but because inequality is widening, the political system has become unresponsive to the demands of the people, and because US can no longer arbitrarily impose its will on the world.

Globalization has fueled the rise of populism, it has helped to exacerbate ethnic and racial tensions, and it is largely responsible for the hollowing out of America's industrial core. Haass's antidote would only throw more gas on the fire and hasten the day when liberals and conservatives form into rival camps and join in a bloody battle to the end. Someone has to stop the madness before the country descends into a second Civil War.

What Haass fails to discuss, is Washington's perverse reliance on force to preserve the liberal world order, after all, it's not like the US assumed its current dominant role by merely competing more effectively in global markets. Oh, no. Behind the silk glove lies the iron fist, which has been used in over 50 regime change operations since the end of WW2. The US has over 800 military bases scattered across the planet and has laid to waste one country after the other in successive interventions, invasions and occupations for as long as anyone can remember. This penchant for violence has been sharply criticized by other members of the United Nations, but only Russia has had the courage to openly oppose Washington where it really counts, on the battlefield.

Russia is presently engaged in military operations that have either prevented Washington from achieving its strategic objectives (like Ukraine) or rolled back Washington's proxy-war in Syria. Naturally, liberal elites like Haass feel threatened by these developments since they are accustomed to a situation in which 'the world is their oyster'. But, alas, oysters

have been removed from the menu, and the United States is going to have to make the adjustment or risk a third world war.

What Russian President Vladimir Putin objects to, is Washington's unilateralism, the cavalier breaking of international law to pursue its own imperial ambitions. Ironically, Putin has become the greatest defender of the international system and, in particular, the United Nations which is a point he drove home in his presentation at the 70th session of the UN General Assembly in New York on September 28, 2015, just two days before Russian warplanes began their bombing missions in Syria. Here's part of what he said:



“The United Nations is unique in terms of legitimacy, representation and universality....We consider any attempt to undermine the legitimacy of the United Nations as extremely dangerous. It may result in the collapse of the entire architecture of international relations, leaving no rules except the rule of force. The world will be dominated by selfishness rather than collective effort, by dictate rather than equality and liberty, and instead of truly sovereign nations we will have colonies controlled from outside.”(Russian President Vladimir Putin at [the 70th session of the UN General Assembly](#))

Putin's speech, followed by the launching of the Russian operation in Syria, was a clear warning to the foreign policy establishment that they would no longer be allowed to topple governments and destroy countries with impunity. Just as Putin was willing to put Russian military personnel at risk in Syria, so too, he will probably put them at risk in Venezuela, Lebanon, Ukraine and other locations where they might be needed. And while Russia does not have anywhere near the raw power of the US military, Putin seems to be saying that he will put his troops in the line of fire to defend international law and the sovereignty of nations. Here's Putin again:

“We all know that after the end of the Cold War the world was left with one center of dominance, and those who found themselves at the top of the pyramid were tempted to think that, since they are so powerful and exceptional, they know best what needs to be done and thus they don't need to reckon with the UN, which, instead of rubber-stamping the decisions they need, often stands in their way....

We should all remember the lessons of the past. For example, we remember examples from our Soviet past, when the Soviet Union exported social experiments, pushing for changes in other countries for ideological reasons, and this often led to tragic consequences and caused degradation instead of progress.

It seems, however, that instead of learning from other people's mistakes, some prefer to repeat them and continue to export revolutions, only now these are "democratic" revolutions. Just look at the situation in the Middle East and Northern Africa already mentioned by the previous speaker. ... Instead of bringing about reforms, aggressive intervention indiscriminately destroyed government institutions and the local way of life. Instead of democracy and progress, there is now violence, poverty, social disasters and total disregard for human rights, including even the right to life.

I'm urged to ask those who created this situation: do you at least realize now what you've done?" (Russian President Vladimir Putin at the 70th session of the UN General Assembly)

Here Putin openly challenges the concept of a 'liberal world order' which in fact is a sobriquet used to conceal Washington's relentless plundering of the planet. There's nothing liberal about toppling regimes and plunging millions of people into anarchy, poverty and desperation. Putin is simply trying to communicate to US leaders that the world is changing, that nations in Asia are gaining strength and momentum, and that Washington will have to abandon the idea that any constraint on its behavior is a threat to its national security interests.

Former national security advisor to Jimmy Carter, Zbigniew Brzezinski, appears to agree on this point and suggests that the US begin to rethink its approach to foreign policy now that the world has fundamentally changed and other countries are demanding a bigger place at the table.

What most people don't realize about Brzezinski, is that he dramatically changed his views on global hegemony a few years after he published his 1997 masterpiece *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperative*. In his 2012 book, *Strategic Vision*, Brzezinski recommended a more thoughtful and cooperative approach that would ease America's unavoidable transition (decline?) without creating a power vacuum that could lead to global chaos. Here's a short excerpt from an article he wrote in 2016 for the *American Interest* titled "Toward a Global Realignment":

"The fact is that there has never been a truly "dominant" global power until the emergence of America on the world scene....That era is now ending....As its era of global dominance ends, the United States needs to take the lead in realigning the global power architecture....The United States is still the world's politically, economically, and militarily most powerful entity but, given complex geopolitical shifts in regional balances, it is no longer the globally imperial power.

America can only be effective in dealing with the current Middle Eastern violence if it forges a coalition that involves, in varying degrees, also Russia and China....

A constructive U.S. policy must be patiently guided by a long-range vision. It must seek outcomes that promote the gradual realization in Russia... that its only place as an influential world power is ultimately within Europe. China's increasing role in the Middle East should reflect the reciprocal American and Chinese realization that a growing U.S.-PRC partnership in coping with the Middle Eastern crisis is an historically significant test of their ability to shape and enhance together wider global stability.

The alternative to a constructive vision, and especially the quest for a one-

sided militarily and ideologically imposed outcome, can only result in prolonged and self-destructive futility.

Since the next twenty years may well be the last phase of the more traditional and familiar political alignments with which we have grown comfortable, the response needs to be shaped now.... And that accommodation has to be based on a strategic vision that recognizes the urgent need for a new geopolitical framework." ("Toward a Global Realignment", Zbigniew Brzezinski, [The American Interest](#))

This strikes me as a particularly well-reasoned and insightful article. It shows that Brzezinski understood that the world had changed, that power had shifted eastward, and that the only path forward for America was cooperation, accommodation, integration and partnership. Tragically, there is no base of support for these ideas on Capital Hill, the White House or among the U.S. foreign policy establishment. The entire political class and their allies in the media unanimously support a policy of belligerence, confrontation and war. The United States will not prevail in a confrontation with Russia and China any more than it will be able to turn back the clock to the post war era when America, the Superpower, reigned supreme. Confrontation will only accelerate the pace of US decline and the final collapse of the liberal world order.

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