

## Zbigniew Brzezinski's Dangerous Chessboard

In his 1997 book *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, former Carter National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski has revived the British colonialist religion known as “geopolitics,” as it was propounded by Halford Mackinder. This is the apocalyptic religion that led to World War I and II. In his book (and in his business dealings), Brzezinski promotes the idea that there is a “zone of instability” that encompasses the Transcaucasus and Central Asia in which the clever chessplayer can manipulate tribal, ethnic, or religious differences to his advantage (Figure 6). A central theme of his book, is to deny Russia any influence whatsoever over developments in these countries on its border. At the same time, Brzezinski and his family have made their services available to the Anglo-American oligarchy's grab for the region's extensive oil, natural gas, and mineral wealth.

Brzezinski writes: “Russia's loss of its dominant position on the Baltic Sea was replicated on the Black Sea not only because of Ukraine's independence, but also because the newly independent Caucasian states—Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan—enhanced the opportunities for Turkey to reestablish its once-lost influence in the region. . . . The emergence of the independent Central Asian states meant that in some places Russia's southeastern frontier had been pushed back northward more than 1,000 miles. The new states now controlled vast mineral and energy deposits that were bound to attract foreign interests. . . . Supported from the outside by Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia, the Central Asian states have not been inclined to trade their new political sovereignty even for the sake of beneficial economic integration with Russia, as many Russians continued to hope they would. . . . For the Russians, the specter of a potential conflict with the Islamic

states along Russia's entire southern flank (which, adding in Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan, account for more than 300 million people) has to be a source of serious concern.”

He devotes a chapter to what he calls “The Eurasian Balkans”:

“In Europe, the word ‘Balkans’ conjures up images of ethnic conflicts and great-power regional rivalries. Eurasia, too, has its ‘Balkans,’ but the Eurasian Balkans are much larger, more populated, even more religiously and ethnically heterogeneous. They are located within that large geographic oblong that demarcates the central zone of instability . . . and that embraces portions of southeastern Europe, Central Asia and parts of South Asia, the Persian Gulf area, and the Middle East.

“The Eurasian Balkans form the inner core of that oblong. . . : not only are its political entities unstable, but they tempt and invite the intrusion of more powerful neighbors, each of whom is determined to oppose the region's domination by another. It is this familiar combination of a power vacuum and power suction that justifies the appellation ‘Eurasian Balkans.’ . . .

“The Eurasian Balkans . . . are of importance from the standpoint of security and historical ambitions to at least three of their most immediate and more powerful neighbors, namely, Russia, Turkey and Iran, with China also signaling an increasing political interest in the region. But the Eurasian Balkans are infinitely more important as a potential economic prize: an enormous concentration of natural gas and oil reserves is located in the region, in addition to important minerals, including gold. . . .

“A geostrategic issue of crucial importance is posed by China's emergence as a major power. The most appealing outcome would be to co-opt a democratising and free-marketing China into a larger Asian framework of cooperation. . . . Potentially, the most dangerous scenario would be a grand coalition of China, Russia, and perhaps Iran, an ‘anti-hegemonic coalition’ united not by ideology but by complementary grievances.”

ber of eastern European nations, to shape the minds of students, and teach them “democracy.” Finally, the United States will support non-governmental organization (NGO) development.

### Silk Road Diplomacy

In Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, Albright followed essentially the same script. Kyrgyzstan had been hailed as an “island of democracy” in the region, largely due to the fact that the post-independence leadership was not the same as in the earlier Soviet period. Kyrgyzstan also moved very quickly

with free market reforms, liberalizing prices, and cutting state subsidies. It also set up a stock market, with U.S. assistance. The rapid liberalization had a devastating social effect, as wide-ranging state programs, to provide a social safety net, were dismantled.

Thus, in 1994 and 1995, the government began to effect a shift, particularly in controlling the activities of opposition groups and publications. President Askar Akayev, whose term was not extended through a referendum, was reelected in December 1995 to the position he still holds. The next Presidential elections are scheduled for December 2000. The