



THE TRILATERAL COMMISSION
WARSAW 2004 PLENARY MEETING

SPECIAL ADDRESS BY FOUNDING DIRECTOR
ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI
IN THE PALACE OF CULTURE ON 9TH MAY 2004



“Two Poles Meet”

*With HH Pope John-Paul II on the occasion of a Private Audience
granted to the Trilateral Commission at the Vatican on 18th April 1983*

The Commission was formed 30 years ago – and when David Rockefeller and I were actively engaged in shaping it neither of us could have ever imagined that someday the Commission would be hosted in a city that 60 years ago was razed to the ground after the Nazis had crushed the 63-day long Polish uprising which the Soviet Army watched passively from just across the river; in a city that 30 years ago was governed by a servile regime imposed on Poland by the Soviet Union which deprived the Poles of basic democratic rights, and in a city that today is the capital of an independent and democratic state that by its own volition is an important member both of NATO and of the EU.

When the Commission was formed some 30 years ago its basic concept – the “doctrine” of trilateralism – was strategically clear-cut: that trilateral cooperation between the three major democratic centers of economic and political power – between North America, Western Europe, and Japan – was the key to global stability and progress; that therefore trans-Atlantic cooperation had to be wedded to trans-Pacific cooperation; and that in the world at large democracy plus prosperity equal influence and power and that such power and influence should be harnessed for the common good, both for the sake of self-interest and of the moral imperative.

In practical geopolitical terms, the foregoing meant that the then already existing close ties between America and one half of Europe (only up to the Elbe river) would be extended to embrace also Japan, already increasingly vital economically but still isolated geopolitically under the exclusive umbrella of the security connection with only the U.S.

It was a visionary strategic undertaking in a geopolitically divided world still dominated by the Cold War, with the democratic portions still confronted and challenged by an ambitious totalitarian Soviet Union, with an isolated but still Maoist China on the sidelines, and a strongly anti-western non-aligned Third World.

What a change since then!

The Soviet Union is gone forever, and a painfully changing Russia would gravely risk its national and territorial future if it were to embark on a renewed imperial quest; Europe is now truly whole and free, and it is both expanding and constitutionally defining itself on a continental basis; Japan is more active politically on the global arena than ever before, even with some Japanese troops deployed in Iraq, and it is a preeminent donor to Third World development; while in the Far East democracy and prosperity are becoming more widespread; in China rapid economic growth is being pursued largely by free enterprise and there is a growing focus on the need for basic political reform; in the Third World statist doctrines are replaced increasingly by economic pragmatism, and a notably democratically governed India is dramatically taking off in its economic development.

If basic political-economic-military trends continue for another 30 years we are likely to see a world in which the world's "pecking order" will probably involve the following hierarchy of the top five globally influential powers: (1) the United States (NAFTA); (2) the EU (with Turkey and Ukraine); (3) China; (4) Japan and (5) India.

In that setting, the democratic trilateral core of North America, Europe, and East Asia will still be the principal impulse of innovation, the critical source of stability, and the point of origin of the radiating appeal of democracy.

But only if the present trends continue, and they could be reversed or derailed—there are already some symptoms of mounting disorder and basic misjudgments that give cause for prudent concern.

It is not a criticism but a statement of fact to note that today the United States is more isolated, mistrusted, and in some places even hated than ever before. It could even become bogged down in the new huge Global Balkans (from Suez to Xinjiang) – especially if America's engagement in Iraq continues to be largely solitary while its relationship with the world remains heavily influenced by a largely theologically defined self-declared "war on Terrorism."

It is not a prediction but a real possibility that Europe's unification will continue to be mainly socio-economic, with Europe remaining politically diffuse and inward-oriented, without a defined strategic vision of the larger world and without the political will and the military means to genuinely share with the United States in the definition and then pursuit of common strategic goals.

In that context, Russia might divert its efforts in engaging in a closer association with Europe toward more traditional imperial goals, to the detriment both of democracy in Russia and of national independence of some of Russia's recently emancipated but still vulnerable neighbors.

It is far from certain that the wide gap between the trajectories of China's socioeconomic transformation, which produce more pluralism, and of its much slower political transformation will not cause major political upheavals, detrimental to the stability of the Far East.

Last but far from least, the growing access not only by states but by terrorist or criminal organizations to weapons of mass destruction, in the setting of a percolating global turmoil and intense political resentments that cannot be understood merely by the repetitive invocation of the word "terrorism", poses the risk of the progressive degradation of global order as well as of the growing vulnerability of democratic societies.

The cumulative result could be an escalating global chaos, fueled by a new doctrine of divisive hatred, filling the ideological gap created by the end of Marxism, focused specifically on America as the alleged source of most of the world's ills. Fusing anti-Americanism with anti-globalizationism and finding its emotional arsenal in fundamentalist religious, ethnic, and historic grievances, the new doctrine of hatred could ignite worldwide passions and fuel escalating violence.

We need, therefore, a revitalized, politically focused, strategically pointed, and geopolitically enlarging trilateralism. The concept of an expanding democratic trilateral community is still relevant, indeed even more needed. But it can be pursued only on the basis of a genuine strategic dialogue, a dialogue based on moderation and not extremism, on shared respect and not on the Manichean formula "if you are not with us, you are against us." Joint policies mean sharing the burdens as well as the decisions.

It is relevant to note from the American perspective that U.S. foreign policy over the several decades of the Cold War was remarkably consistent and successful precisely because the American people would not endorse extremism either of the Right or of the Left. Bipartisanship at home and respect for allies abroad worked well in the past and they are needed to cope with the future.

Today, we need a shared strategy for three grand tasks to promote the further expansion both of the EU and of NATO, to pacify the new Global Balkans, and to encourage a collective structure of security cooperation in Asia and notably in the Far East.

On promoting the further expansion both of the EU and of NATO: Neither political geography nor geostrategy are static concepts. They evolve – and the recent expansions of both organizations place now on the agenda the future status of Ukraine, of Turkey, of the newly independent states of the Caucasus. Their eventual association with the enlarging

trans-Atlantic community will then facilitate the constructive engagement of Russia, with its imperial option altogether then foreclosed. We need to start planning and advancing on that next phase.

On pacifying the new Global Balkans: Stability will be achieved not by a combination of foreign occupation and patronizing preaching of democracy, nor by failing to seriously promote peaceful accommodation to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but by acting together on the recognition that the problems of Afghanistan/Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are mutually interactive; and that separate but parallel progress on dealing with each is necessary for the stabilization of the region as a whole. Policy for this vast region cannot be made by only one component of the trilateral community; Europe and also Japan must be engaged on a substantial scale with money and men but by the same token they must also share in shaping the crucial strategic decisions. The EU as a whole must play a political role commensurate with its global potential; and the United States must be less unilateral and more willing to hand over to the UN the political stewardship over Iraq. Particularly glaring is the failure especially of America to proclaim openly and specifically the needed compromise formula for a fair and legitimate peace accord between Israel and Palestine for without such peace the Arab region will be increasingly enflamed.

Last but not least, we must strive to encourage a collective structure of security cooperation in Asia and notably in the Far East, especially given China's emerging power (reminiscent in some respects of Europe prior to 1914) and North Korea's nuclear ambitions. At the very least, the inclusion of both China and India in the G-8 would make sense, now that a non-democratic and economically struggling Russia is a part of it. Both China and India are already becoming top-ranked powers. Consideration might be given also to expanding the OSCE into Eurasia (changing the E to represent Eurasia), in addition to sub-regional security arrangements. Japan needs to assume a more active political role in these matters.

To conclude, I see the Trilateral Commission not only as an annual get-together of the democratic world's rich and influential – but as the institutional expression of a strategic vision that calls for action.

In a city reborn from the dead, and at a time of intensifying global turmoil, it is useful to remind ourselves that the pursuit of joint purpose is also our historical duty.

Zbigniew Brzezinski, is Counselor at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, DC; Robert Osgood Professor of American Foreign Affairs, Paul Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, The Johns Hopkins University; former U.S. Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs; Founding Director of The Trilateral Commission