

WEBVTT

00:00:03.140 --> 00:00:09.760

<v SPEAKER\_1>Hello again, and welcome to Global Exchange, part of the Canadian Global Affairs Institute's Podcast Network.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>I'm your host, Colin Robertson.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>On this episode, recorded on June the 4th, we speak with Edward Luce about his new book, Zbigniew, The Life of Zbigniew Brzezinski, America's Great Power Prophet.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>Ed Luce is the Financial Times Chief US.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>Commentator and Columnist.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>He is the author of three acclaimed books, The Retreat of Western Liberalism, Time to Start Thinking, America and the Age of Dissent, and In Spite of the Gods, The Strange Rise of Modern India.

00:00:41.540 --> 00:00:43.980

<v SPEAKER\_1>We reach him in Washington, DC.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>Ed, welcome to Global Exchange.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>Pleasure to be with you, Colin.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>For listeners, Ed, you've written another superb book.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>It's Grand Narrative and it captures the life and times of America's, as you call them, Great Power Prophet.

00:00:58.600 --> 00:01:14.740

<v SPEAKER\_1>Zbigniew takes us from his early years in the interwar life in Poland and what we once used to call Middle Europe to Montreal, where his father was the Polish Consul General, through the war years where Zbigniew graduated from Loyola and McGill.

00:01:14.740 --> 00:01:15.580

<v SPEAKER\_1>He did his Ph.D.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>at Harvard and then moved to New York City's Columbia University during the 60s.

00:01:19.940 --> 00:01:35.080

<v SPEAKER\_1>Instrumental in setting up the Trilateral Commission, he became involved in providing advice to Republican and especially Democratic politicians, including JFK and LBJ, before becoming National Security Advisor to President Jimmy Carter.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>He returned to academe as a teacher, writer and public intellectual until his death at 89 in 2017.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>Ed does a brilliant job in portraying Zbigniew and his world, the evolving times, the personalities, the politics of which Zbigniew was not just an astute observer, but an active player.

00:01:52.800 --> 00:01:58.120

<v SPEAKER\_1>I strongly recommend that you buy and read this epic biography.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>So let's get started.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>Ed, why this biography on Brzezinski?

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<v SPEAKER\_2>Well, first of all, thank you for your kind words about the book about Zbigniew.

00:02:10.360 --> 00:02:11.380

<v SPEAKER\_2>Well, that's a good question.

00:02:11.380 --> 00:02:19.380

<v SPEAKER\_2>I mean, there have been many biographies of Henry Kissinger, many biographies of George Kennan.

00:02:20.820 --> 00:02:34.680

<v SPEAKER\_2>And apart from one very good French one, which was more an intellectual biography, translated into English by Justin Weiss, and some Polish writings about him, there's been no full life biography of Brzezinski.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>And I think part of the reason for that is because he didn't really cooperate with potential biographers.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>And so when his family came to me with these enormous, really, toss-doyen-length diaries that he kept as national security advisor, and said I could have them without strings attached, I pretty quickly got immersed and addicted.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>I mean, this is sort of first draft of history, and there was a lot of history.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>Much of it, you know, echoes today.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>There was the invasion of Afghanistan, Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, normalization with China, Deng Xiaoping's visit to the US.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>There was the return of the Panama Canal to Panamanian sovereignty.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>There was the Camp David peace talks, which resulted in, you know, the first Arab recognition of Israel by Egypt.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>There were the strategic arms limitation talks, SALT 1, SALT 2.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>I mean, it goes on and on.

00:03:33.020 --> 00:03:37.640

<v SPEAKER\_2>And of course, the very ill-fated Iranian hostage crisis.

00:03:37.640 --> 00:03:45.620

<v SPEAKER\_2>So it was hard for a journalist not to, to get quickly pulled in.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>And I think what this book, at least what I hope to do with this book, is redress a really big gap here.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>I mean, he was a seminal Cold War strategist and a very important post-Cold War figure.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>And there really should have been, there really should

have been a full life biography.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>And particularly given the cinematic arc of his life, you know, as you mentioned Colin, from Inter Bellum, Warsaw, to, you know, to Washington in 2017 where he died.

00:04:18.640 --> 00:04:21.080

<v SPEAKER\_2>That's a pretty cinematic narrative arc.

00:04:21.080 --> 00:04:24.660

<v SPEAKER\_2>And so I loved writing this.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>All right, I'm going to go to the relationship with Henry Kissinger because it is seminal and it really does come through, as you say, permeates the book.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>When I was posted in DC and I met Brzezinski at Johns Hopkins, before I saw him, a friend of mine compared the relationship with Kissinger, which as I say, permeates the book, to that of Amadeus and Saliero.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>You think of the films Amadeus.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>I'd never forgotten it, but reading your book forced me to rethink my impression of Brzezinski, whose books I admired, but thought he was very much in it.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>It was a bit in the reflection of Kissinger.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>But you make it clear that they were both grand strategists, astute politically, media savvy, and knew how to communicate to the political elite.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>And as you point out, at the end Kissinger says they may not have been friends, but he certainly had great respect for Brzezinski.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>And I think as you write, he said that Kissinger himself felt they were the two great strategists himself and Brzezinski.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>Yeah, it was quite funny.

00:05:28.620 --> 00:05:32.280

<v SPEAKER\_2>I mean, I did interview Kissinger for this book at some length.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>He was very cooperative, solicitous even.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>And I asked him, where would you rank Brzezinski in terms of American Cold War strategists?

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<v SPEAKER\_2>And he said he would definitely be in the top two.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>It was pretty clear who he had in mind as number one.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>The view that Kissinger took was that Brzezinski was always five years behind him.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>He was five years younger than him.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>It took him five years longer to get offered a tenured professorship at Harvard, although he rejected it.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>By that point, he'd moved to Columbia.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>He became National Security Advisor to Jimmy Carter, eight years after Kissinger became National Security Advisor to Richard Nixon.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>And so Kissinger without putting it so bluntly said he was always nipping at my heels.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>And I think certainly if you measure the two men in terms of household recognition, name recognition, Kissinger was a celebrity, which is a very rare thing in foreign policy, but he was a household name and to some extent still is.

00:06:45.400 --> 00:06:47.160

<v SPEAKER\_2>And Brzezinski wasn't.

00:06:47.840 --> 00:06:53.880

<v SPEAKER\_2>And so if you measure it by sort of global brand, then clearly Kissinger is a bigger figure.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>But if you measure them by impact on the Cold War and an America's strategy to deal with the Soviet Union at that really critical late phase of the Cold War, and of course they didn't know it was a late phase at that point we do now in the 70s, then I think Brzezinski had a more significant impact for sure on the Cold War and indeed on bringing about the unraveling, the demise of the Soviet Union.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>The Kissinger and Brzezinski had two very, very different approaches.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>And this was the source of much of their intellectual disputes in public.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>And then always in private as well at dinners in Washington, however sort of heated their differences were.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>And however embittered at times their clashes became, they always continued to meet for dinner.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>And just in a nutshell, Kissinger's view of the Soviet Union was that it was a permanent feature of the landscape, and America had to accommodate itself to the Soviets.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>Hence the detente policy.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>And Brzezinski's view was that the Soviet Union had an Achilles heel, something he'd written about first at his McGill thesis in 1950, a paper called Russo-Soviet Nationalism, in which he says that not just the captive nations, as they were called of the Warsaw Pact, his native Poland, Hungary, etc., but within the USSR, there were suppressed nations and nationalities that did not see themselves as Soviet citizens and that felt they were part of a Russian empire that was dressed in Marxist clothing, and that this could be weaponized and used to help unravel the Soviet empire as he saw it.

00:08:49.520 --> 00:08:53.100

<v SPEAKER\_2>And this was a very unique perspective when he first formed it.

00:08:53.240 --> 00:09:03.180

<v SPEAKER\_2>It was clearly infused with his Polishness and his sense of history from a Polish perspective.

00:09:03.180 --> 00:09:08.440

<v SPEAKER\_2>But it was something he then 30 years later weaponizes in the White House.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>No, and it's not just high politics, it's also soft power, Radio Free Europe and things like that you describe.

00:09:14.880 --> 00:09:24.520

<v SPEAKER\_1>That he really looked beyond just the pure kind of technical high diplomacy side, but into and utilized American soft power.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>He did.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>And that, you know, the Helsinki Agreement, it was of 1975, in which the West recognized Soviet post-war borders.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>This was a deep source of insecurity in Moscow and to Brezhnev, the Russian leader.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>And in exchange for that, the Soviets were persuaded to sign what was called the Third Basket, which was the Human Rights Basket.

00:09:50.460 --> 00:09:53.680

<v SPEAKER\_2>And Kissinger told Brezhnev, don't worry, this is a European demand.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>It really doesn't matter.

00:09:55.480 --> 00:10:00.880

<v SPEAKER\_2>All this freedom of movement, freedom of expression, freedom of religion, stuff, pay it no attention.

00:10:00.880 --> 00:10:04.520

<v SPEAKER\_2>And then when Carter came to office, Brzezinski weaponized it.

00:10:04.520 --> 00:10:06.200

<v SPEAKER\_2>And I think it's no accident.

00:10:06.200 --> 00:10:21.520

<v SPEAKER\_2>I mean, this is a deeply fascinating story, but I think it's no accident that Poland's solidarity movement burst onto the scene during the Carter administration towards the end of it in August 1980.

00:10:21.520 --> 00:10:46.540

<v SPEAKER\_2>And that nine years later, eight years after Carter left office, when solidarity swept the elections in June 1989 in Poland, and the complete landslide to the surprise of the communist leader, General Jaruzelski, that because Jaruzelski was forced, he felt compelled to accept the results, that was when the Cold War ended.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>It wasn't five months later, on November the 9th, when the Berlin Wall fell.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>It was on June the 4th, 1989, when the communist system, the Marxist-Leninist regimes, accepted they no longer had a monopoly on power.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>And Brzezinski was really a co-author of that situation.

00:11:07.260 --> 00:11:14.140

<v SPEAKER\_2>So yeah, soft power, you know, Helsinki was soft power for sure.

00:11:14.140 --> 00:11:18.500

<v SPEAKER\_1>Now, co-author with, of all people, the Pope.

00:11:18.500 --> 00:11:41.720

<v SPEAKER\_1>It's, as you write, you know, I think he had P on his telephone, so he could, and then the relationship, I want to tell the listeners a little bit of the relationship with Jean-Paul and also what he was able to, because at one point you also described that Poland could well have been invaded the same way that the Czechs have been invaded, the Hungarians have been invaded.

00:11:41.760 --> 00:11:42.640

<v SPEAKER\_2>Absolutely right.

00:11:42.640 --> 00:12:02.960

<v SPEAKER\_2>One of these sort of really amazing serendipities that, you know, you have this Polish speaking or Polish American grand



strategist in the White House at the time when you get not only the first Polish Pope elected in 1978, but the first non-Italian in 453 years.

00:12:02.960 --> 00:12:08.120

<v SPEAKER\_2>And by the way, there hasn't been an Italian since then, but that's another story.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>And that they had met before, and of course conversed in Polish.

00:12:14.720 --> 00:12:31.860

<v SPEAKER\_2>And so Brzezinski set up this hotline to the Vatican, talked to the Pope, had this very intimate, well, very extensive, but very frank correspondence, which I got translated, fascinating exchange of letters over many, many years.

00:12:31.860 --> 00:12:37.140

<v SPEAKER\_2>And when in late 1980, solidarity had spread like wildfire.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>It had more than 10 million members by December 1980, having been born only in August of that year.

00:12:43.580 --> 00:12:50.140

<v SPEAKER\_2>That was almost a third of Poland's population, mortal threat to the Soviet system.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>And the Soviets amassed 18 divisions on the border with Poland.

00:12:56.900 --> 00:12:59.920

<v SPEAKER\_2>And then there were a couple of East German divisions.

00:12:59.920 --> 00:13:02.480

<v SPEAKER\_2>So you can imagine what Polish hearts were thinking.

00:13:02.560 --> 00:13:07.340

<v SPEAKER\_2>You've got Russians and Germans again about to invade.

00:13:07.340 --> 00:13:28.760

<v SPEAKER\_2>And Brzezinski and the Pope managed through coordination to basically convince Moscow that Poland would be indigestible, a porcupine, that it would not be like Czechoslovakia in 1968, which was pretty easy, or Hungary in 1956, which was relatively easy, though there was more blood.

00:13:30.200 --> 00:13:33.260

<v SPEAKER\_2>That this time they would bite off more than they could chew.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>And remember that Brzezinski at the same time is of course fueling the Mujahideen rebellion against the Soviets who've invaded Afghanistan the previous year.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>So that history doesn't thank you for what didn't happen.

00:13:49.380 --> 00:13:53.460

<v SPEAKER\_2>But the non-invasion of Poland, which could have really, really been hairy.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>I mean, it could have triggered a World War III kind of brinksmanship.

00:13:58.340 --> 00:14:08.320

<v SPEAKER\_2>The non-invasion of Poland is partly the fruit of this remarkably unlikely relationship between a Polish Pope and a Polish grand strategist in the White House.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>Now, Brzezinski had a reputation as being kind of a difficult character.

00:14:14.240 --> 00:14:17.640

<v SPEAKER\_1>And yet, as I read the book, it was clear, well, he didn't suffer fools.

00:14:17.640 --> 00:14:22.380

<v SPEAKER\_1>He was remarkably astute at cultivating very different personalities.

00:14:22.380 --> 00:14:26.060

<v SPEAKER\_1>You talk about the Pope, I think of David Rockefeller and the Trilateral Commission.

00:14:26.700 --> 00:14:41.340

<v SPEAKER\_1>And then there's Jimmy Carter, who in many ways you would have thought, what a less unlikely pair than the sort of aristocratic Pole, who's a migrant to Canada, and then the Southern Baptist peanut farmer.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>Tell us a little bit about that relationship.

00:14:43.880 --> 00:14:45.060

<v SPEAKER\_2>It really is a gripping one.

00:14:45.060 --> 00:15:03.900

<v SPEAKER\_2>Well, they first met in 1972 when Brzezinski picked Carter to be the Democratic Governor as a member of the Trilateral Commission, which he had just set up, as you say, with David Rockefeller's money, and it was set up as a rival to Bilderberg, to the Bilderberg Conference.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>And Carter was a one-term governor of Georgia, but had presidential ambitions, knew nothing about foreign policy, so he used the Trilateral Commission.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>It really is a crash course in the ways of the world in foreign policy, and Brzezinski became essentially his tutor.

00:15:21.320 --> 00:15:49.980

<v SPEAKER\_2>And, you know, here you have this sort of quite Machiavellian, Polish-American grand strategist, and this Sunday school preacher, a peanut farmer from Georgia, forming an alliance as early as then, like four years before Carter won the presidency, in which Brzezinski is sort of quite amused by Carter, and he's very indulgent of him, but doesn't think he has much hope of becoming president, so he's keeping his eyes in other fires.

00:15:50.060 --> 00:16:10.720

<v SPEAKER\_2>There are other potential presidents, Ted Kennedy being one, Scoop Jackson, and then lo and behold, Watergate happens, and suddenly there's a great demand for somebody who is a truth teller, somebody who is honest, an outsider, and Carter just sort of fits the bill.

00:16:11.860 --> 00:16:30.480

<v SPEAKER\_2>And so Brzezinski becomes his sort of advisor tutor, if you like, to such an extent that Carter would say on campaign stops, and then even in the White House after he became president, he would keep saying, I am an eager student of Zbig.

00:16:30.480 --> 00:16:32.940

<v SPEAKER\_2>And Brzezinski said, look, Mr.

00:16:32.940 --> 00:16:37.480

<v SPEAKER\_2>President, I found this sort of change of notes, and he wrote a note saying, Mr.

00:16:37.480 --> 00:16:42.580

<v SPEAKER\_2>President, I would advise you not to say that anymore.

00:16:42.580 --> 00:16:45.380

<v SPEAKER\_2>The American people do not want a student as president.

00:16:47.020 --> 00:16:50.860

<v SPEAKER\_2>And Carter scribbled in the margins, okay.

00:16:50.860 --> 00:16:53.500

<v SPEAKER\_2>Which I thought was quite funny.

00:16:53.500 --> 00:16:59.200

<v SPEAKER\_2>But it was a very improbable, but deeply mutually respectful relationship.

00:16:59.200 --> 00:17:09.900

<v SPEAKER\_2>I mean, it's nothing like Trump and Rubio, for example, where I think there's a yes, sort of essence to that relationship.

00:17:10.260 --> 00:17:25.200

<v SPEAKER\_2>And very different, of course, also to Kissinger-Nixon, which although it was an extraordinarily productive partnership, was deeply riven with suspicion and mistrust and complex psychology of both men.

00:17:25.200 --> 00:17:28.160

<v SPEAKER\_2>Carter and Brzezinski talked every morning.

00:17:28.160 --> 00:17:30.160

<v SPEAKER\_2>He met him sort of eight to ten times a day.

00:17:30.160 --> 00:17:32.620

<v SPEAKER\_2>He was the first person who saw them in the morning.

00:17:32.620 --> 00:17:35.260

<v SPEAKER\_2>And they had this sort of running, running dialogue.

00:17:35.260 --> 00:17:39.200

<v SPEAKER\_2>Carter read everything that Brzezinski would throw at him.

00:17:39.200 --> 00:17:41.100

<v SPEAKER\_2>He read too much, arguably.

00:17:41.100 --> 00:17:43.340

<v SPEAKER\_2>But it was a productive relationship.

00:17:43.340 --> 00:17:46.440

<v SPEAKER\_2>And I just sort of finish, rather a long answer, my apologies.

00:17:46.440 --> 00:18:02.140

<v SPEAKER\_2>I'll just finish by saying this, that the first couple of years of the Carter administration was really divided between Vance, Cy Vance, the Secretary of State, and Brzezinski, the National Security Advisor, who had very different plans for how to manage the Cold War.

00:18:02.140 --> 00:18:13.320

<v SPEAKER\_2>And I think Vance had Carter's heart, and Brzezinski had Carter's head, because Vance was more of a sort of, let's all get along, let's renew detente.

00:18:14.500 --> 00:18:20.800

<v SPEAKER\_2>Let's not pay attention to human rights behind the Iron Curtain, and Brzezinski, of course, took a very different position.

00:18:20.800 --> 00:18:29.680

<v SPEAKER\_2>By the last two years of the Carter administration, Brzezinski is really winning every issue, and he's setting up the framework for Reaganism.

00:18:32.100 --> 00:18:35.520

<v SPEAKER\_3>Hi, I'm Dave Ferri, the President and CEO of The Canadian Global Affairs Institute.

00:18:35.520 --> 00:18:40.140

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00:18:58.700 --> 00:18:59.280

<v SPEAKER\_1>I think that's right.

00:18:59.320 --> 00:19:08.040

<v SPEAKER\_1>I think I would also say about Carter, which I did not know, was that Brzezinski was also, had Rosamund in his corner, as you point out.

00:19:08.040 --> 00:19:08.820

<v SPEAKER\_2>He did indeed.

00:19:09.740 --> 00:19:12.640

<v SPEAKER\_2>She was a bit more flimsy than her husband.

00:19:12.640 --> 00:19:12.920

<v SPEAKER\_2>Yes.

00:19:12.920 --> 00:19:24.880

<v SPEAKER\_1>No, she had a reputation for, again, not suffering fools, but she, as you describe it, she clearly had respect for him and felt that he was well-serving her husband when maybe others were not.

00:19:29.300 --> 00:19:31.760

<v SPEAKER\_2>It got really quite nasty.

00:19:32.120 --> 00:19:40.140

<v SPEAKER\_2>It seems now sepia-tinted compared to what goes on in Trump in Washington, but it did actually get quite nasty.

00:19:40.140 --> 00:19:53.160

<v SPEAKER\_2>The fights, the leaks, the media criticisms, and Brzezinski at that time was the bettenoir of the Democratic Party left at that time, and that all changed after 9-11, but he was known as the Darth Vader.

00:19:53.960 --> 00:19:56.400

<v SPEAKER\_2>You know, of the Carter administration.

00:19:56.400 --> 00:20:04.920

<v SPEAKER\_2>And so Carter was continually beset by advisors inside and outside, urging him to get rid of Brzezinski.

00:20:04.920 --> 00:20:21.940

<v SPEAKER\_2>And one of the reasons he didn't is I think Carter himself had such deep respect and affection for Brzezinski, but the First Lady would always step in if there was any doubt, she would step in and steal her husband's resolve, steal his spine.

00:20:22.420 --> 00:20:37.700

<v SPEAKER\_1>And yet the grandees, you point out Cy Vance, but also Averill Herman, I found that interesting, because I would have thought in many ways they helped bring Brzezinski forward, but did they think he was too big for his boots?

00:20:37.700 --> 00:20:38.180

<v SPEAKER\_2>They did.

00:20:38.180 --> 00:20:43.040

<v SPEAKER\_2>And let's be frank, he was a difficult character with very sharp elbows.

00:20:43.040 --> 00:20:44.120

<v SPEAKER\_2>He took no prisoners.

00:20:44.120 --> 00:20:51.740

<v SPEAKER\_2>There was something, the last cavalry charge in history was the Polish Cavalry Charge of the Battle of Warsaw in 1920.

00:20:53.020 --> 00:21:03.300

<v SPEAKER\_2>And there's a sort of great romanticism about the futility of that charge, although they did actually win that battle against Trotsky's Red Army.

00:21:03.300 --> 00:21:09.740

<v SPEAKER\_2>And there was something about the Polish Cavalry Charge to Brzezinski, very different to Kissinger's methods.

00:21:09.740 --> 00:21:13.740

<v SPEAKER\_2>Brzezinski would have open sort of knockdown fights.

00:21:13.740 --> 00:21:15.180

<v SPEAKER\_2>He would go for people's jugular.

00:21:16.600 --> 00:21:18.900

<v SPEAKER\_2>He would take my prisoners, as it were.

00:21:18.900 --> 00:21:21.380

<v SPEAKER\_2>And that, of course, made a lot of enemies.

00:21:21.380 --> 00:21:22.820

<v SPEAKER\_2>He did not tolerate fools.

00:21:22.820 --> 00:21:24.420

<v SPEAKER\_2>He did not flatter the media.

00:21:24.420 --> 00:21:33.420

<v SPEAKER\_2>Members of my profession, like any other, like being flattered and having their ego stroke, Kissinger was an Olympic medalist at that.

00:21:33.420 --> 00:21:43.420

<v SPEAKER\_2>And even during my interviews with him, he would say things that I knew were really over the top, like I read you before I read anybody else, Mr.

00:21:43.420 --> 00:21:43.640

<v SPEAKER\_2>Luce.

00:21:45.300 --> 00:21:46.180

<v SPEAKER\_2>I knew that wasn't true.

00:21:46.180 --> 00:21:49.600

<v SPEAKER\_2>But 1% of you is thinking, maybe he does.

00:21:49.600 --> 00:21:51.040

<v SPEAKER\_2>Maybe he's a teacher.

00:21:51.040 --> 00:21:54.980

<v SPEAKER\_2>Brzezinski never, ever caressed egos.

00:21:54.980 --> 00:21:57.520

<v SPEAKER\_2>So he made a lot of enemies.

00:21:57.520 --> 00:22:06.580

<v SPEAKER\_2>And it took a while for people to recover from battles with Brzezinski.

00:22:06.580 --> 00:22:08.900

<v SPEAKER\_1>And that would account for part of it.

00:22:08.900 --> 00:22:13.820

<v SPEAKER\_1>Ed, Isaiah Berlin used to talk about people that were either hedgehogs or foxes.

00:22:13.820 --> 00:22:17.720

<v SPEAKER\_1>As I was reading the book, I was thinking, was he a fox or a hedgehog?

00:22:17.720 --> 00:22:19.560

<v SPEAKER\_1>You know, the one big idea, the Cold War.

00:22:19.560 --> 00:22:25.360

<v SPEAKER\_1>And as you point out, the nationalities was the way to undo the Soviet Empire.

00:22:26.440 --> 00:22:28.980

<v SPEAKER\_1>But I put it to you.

00:22:28.980 --> 00:22:30.140

<v SPEAKER\_1>Where would you put him in?

00:22:30.140 --> 00:22:32.600

<v SPEAKER\_1>A hedgehog or a fox?

00:22:33.120 --> 00:22:37.360

<v SPEAKER\_2>I think I would have to make him more of a hedgehog than a fox.

00:22:37.360 --> 00:22:53.040

<v SPEAKER\_2>I mean, because the importance and the centrality of his insights into the Soviet Union and how he turned that into strategy to



actual policy, which in reality helps hasten the Soviet Union's demise.

00:22:53.040 --> 00:23:04.960

<v SPEAKER\_2>That was a consistent theme of Brzezinski, both as a Sovietologist at Harvard and Columbia, and then of course, as a policymaker, LBJ administration onwards.

00:23:06.000 --> 00:23:12.780

<v SPEAKER\_2>And I think the cunning of Henry Kissinger would make him the fox here.

00:23:12.780 --> 00:23:22.100

<v SPEAKER\_2>But of course, I can think as I sort of assign those two animals to their respective grand strategists, I can think of caveats immediately.

00:23:22.100 --> 00:23:25.580

<v SPEAKER\_2>Kissinger did have one or two big ideas as well.

00:23:25.580 --> 00:23:34.720

<v SPEAKER\_2>I think what Isaiah Berlin was thinking about was Winston Churchill, who got everything wrong except the one thing that mattered, which was Nazism.

00:23:37.680 --> 00:23:47.600

<v SPEAKER\_1>I came to the conclusion you did, because I thought in the end Brzezinski, more the hedgehog and Kissinger because he would dart from, he would be more the fox.

00:23:47.600 --> 00:23:56.560

<v SPEAKER\_1>But the one big idea was an important idea about because the Cold War was so seminal to certainly my early life when I joined Foreign Service and things.

00:23:56.560 --> 00:24:16.560

<v SPEAKER\_1>So it takes me to my next question is, given the situation we're in today, which you comment and report on, what can we learn from Brzezinski, as you put it, the Great Power Prophet because we would appear we were turning to an age of great power politics, condominiums, spheres of influence, and concerts of power?

00:24:16.560 --> 00:24:17.100

<v SPEAKER\_2>It does.

00:24:18.100 --> 00:24:23.700

<v SPEAKER\_2>I often use the phrase, I didn't coin it, we're living in the era of the revenge of geopolitics.

00:24:24.920 --> 00:24:31.360

<v SPEAKER\_2>So shortly after the Cold War ended, Brzezinski wrote this book called Out of Control.

00:24:31.460 --> 00:24:33.040

<v SPEAKER\_2>It came out in 1993.

00:24:34.220 --> 00:24:41.660

<v SPEAKER\_2>This, remember, is a time of real triumphalism about the West's Cold War victory and the Soviet Union's peaceful collapse.

00:24:43.400 --> 00:25:00.620

<v SPEAKER\_2>The mood in Washington was later maybe a little unfairly labeled during the 1990s as the holiday from history, that America just stopped really seriously in a strategic way, engaging with the world as it had been doing during the Cold War.

00:25:00.700 --> 00:25:03.000

<v SPEAKER\_2>The Cold War kept America honest.

00:25:03.000 --> 00:25:25.940

<v SPEAKER\_2>And Brzezinski saw this as America switching from a strategic mindset where it studied its adversaries, and its allies for that matter, got to know them intimately by sleeping and dreaming in Russian, as he did, to a mindset in the 1990s where America suddenly said, we've got nothing to learn from you.

00:25:25.940 --> 00:25:28.620

<v SPEAKER\_2>You've got to become like us.

00:25:28.620 --> 00:25:30.060

<v SPEAKER\_2>We have a Washington consensus.

00:25:30.160 --> 00:25:33.080

<v SPEAKER\_2>Here is the toolkit for how you become like us.

00:25:33.080 --> 00:25:34.600

<v SPEAKER\_2>You need to study us.

00:25:34.600 --> 00:25:47.340

<v SPEAKER\_2>I think Brzezinski, rather presciently, saw this as hubristic and something that would lead to reaction against the United States from the perceived losers of history.

00:25:47.340 --> 00:26:03.480

<v SPEAKER\_2>Namely, what he called the Alliance of the Aggrieved back in that 1993 book, and this Alliance of the Aggrieved included China, Russia, this time with China as the big brother, Russia as the little brother, Iran, North Korea and others.

00:26:03.480 --> 00:26:10.960

<v SPEAKER\_2>And if you look to last month, May the 9th, Putin's parade made a victory parade on Red Square.

00:26:10.960 --> 00:26:12.500

<v SPEAKER\_2>Who does he have with him?

00:26:12.500 --> 00:26:13.940

<v SPEAKER\_2>He has Xi Jinping.

00:26:13.940 --> 00:26:16.220

<v SPEAKER\_2>He has senior North Koreans.

00:26:16.220 --> 00:26:18.060

<v SPEAKER\_2>He has Ayatollah.

00:26:18.060 --> 00:26:21.540

<v SPEAKER\_2>He has the Alliance of the Aggrieved there with him.

00:26:21.540 --> 00:26:30.580

<v SPEAKER\_2>And I think, so therefore my question wouldn't, I mean, my answer to your very good question would not just be confined to, well, Trump should do things differently.

00:26:30.580 --> 00:26:38.740

<v SPEAKER\_2>You know, that I think we can take as read, and I'm sure your listeners would know roughly how our conversation would go, and we'd agree with each other.

00:26:38.740 --> 00:26:41.300

<v SPEAKER\_2>I would say something a little bit more profound.

00:26:41.300 --> 00:26:51.740

<v SPEAKER\_2>Well, not profound, but a little bit more broadly sort of applicable, which is America needs to reacquire strategic thinking.

00:26:51.740 --> 00:26:55.460

<v SPEAKER\_2>That's, you know, let's just start at that point.

00:26:55.460 --> 00:26:57.220

<v SPEAKER\_2>And this isn't a supply problem.

00:26:57.840 --> 00:27:08.920

<v SPEAKER\_2>There's tons of very brainy people all over America, Chinese speakers, zionologists, other kinds of really, really impressive scholars.

00:27:08.920 --> 00:27:09.920

<v SPEAKER\_2>It's not a demand problem.

00:27:09.920 --> 00:27:11.740

<v SPEAKER\_2>It's not a supply problem, rather.

00:27:11.740 --> 00:27:13.140

<v SPEAKER\_2>It's a demand problem.

00:27:13.140 --> 00:27:15.220

<v SPEAKER\_2>It's Washington is not recruiting them.

00:27:15.220 --> 00:27:24.360

<v SPEAKER\_2>Washington doesn't value them in the way it did during the Cold War, which is why immigrants like Kissinger and Brzezinski could make their way to the top.

00:27:26.040 --> 00:27:34.840

<v SPEAKER\_2>I mean, extraordinary meritocratic sort of mindset that the Cold War concentrated mines, that nuclear shadow, and we don't have that anymore.

00:27:34.840 --> 00:27:38.320

<v SPEAKER\_2>We have a multipolar world, which is much more confusing.

00:27:38.320 --> 00:27:49.460

<v SPEAKER\_2>It's much less conducive to sort of the idea that politics stops at the water's edge because we don't agree on who the chief threats and adversaries are, or whether they're not actually other powers.

00:27:49.460 --> 00:27:52.560

<v SPEAKER\_2>They're things that humanity has and faces in common.

00:27:54.720 --> 00:27:57.640

<v SPEAKER\_2>And so we're not engaging with the world.

00:27:57.640 --> 00:28:09.460

<v SPEAKER\_2>And I include democratic administrations here in the way that we should be, that somebody like Brzezinski or a Kissinger or a Kennan, however much they disagreed with each other, would urge.

00:28:09.460 --> 00:28:13.940

<v SPEAKER\_2>And that therefore would be, you know, this biography is a life.

00:28:13.940 --> 00:28:17.900

<v SPEAKER\_2>And so it's a life warts and all with all the errors that he made too.

00:28:17.900 --> 00:28:26.600

<v SPEAKER\_2>And the extraordinary sort of idiosyncrasies and really, as I say, breathtaking historic sort of events that he lived through.

00:28:26.600 --> 00:28:28.840

<v SPEAKER\_2>But ultimately, what is this book about?

00:28:28.840 --> 00:28:36.180

<v SPEAKER\_2>It's about the making of a strategist, a grand strategist, whether you like him or don't.

00:28:36.180 --> 00:28:40.940

<v SPEAKER\_2>There are things that go up to make, to go into making a grand strategist.

00:28:40.940 --> 00:28:43.880

<v SPEAKER\_2>And I think we need to pay attention to those today.

00:28:45.020 --> 00:28:48.880

<v SPEAKER\_1>Here, here, and that leads me to my penultimate question.

00:28:48.880 --> 00:29:00.940

<v SPEAKER\_1>And that is, what advice would you give, Ed Luce, having done this epic biography on Brzezinski, and as you point out, he is a great strategist, but you learn a lot by doing this and what you've done in your earlier books.

00:29:00.940 --> 00:29:04.200

<v SPEAKER\_1>What advice do you have for a middle power like Canada?

00:29:04.200 --> 00:29:05.860

<v SPEAKER\_1>We have a new prime minister.

00:29:05.860 --> 00:29:08.640

<v SPEAKER\_1>We're under assault from the United States, who Mr.

00:29:08.640 --> 00:29:11.420

<v SPEAKER\_1>Trump would like to absorb us.

00:29:11.420 --> 00:29:11.860

<v SPEAKER\_1>Mr.

00:29:11.860 --> 00:29:14.360

<v SPEAKER\_1>Carney has said that, well, there's a place for Canada in this.

00:29:14.560 --> 00:29:19.720

<v SPEAKER\_1>I'd be interested in any advice you would have for us as a middle power in terms of applying.

00:29:19.720 --> 00:29:23.940

<v SPEAKER\_1>So you say you don't have to have many brains, but applying strategy.

00:29:23.940 --> 00:29:35.300

<v SPEAKER\_2>So I have the good fortune of having known Mark Carney since 1991, when he was a doctoral student at Oxford and his wife, Diana, for way longer.

00:29:35.300 --> 00:29:37.900

<v SPEAKER\_2>And that's how I met Mark.

00:29:37.900 --> 00:29:40.000

<v SPEAKER\_2>And I think you're really very lucky.

00:29:40.000 --> 00:29:43.880

<v SPEAKER\_2>It's very good fortune that you have Mark as your prime minister at this stage.

00:29:43.980 --> 00:29:58.980

<v SPEAKER\_2>Somebody with really extensive international experience, who ordinarily would probably not become prime minister, let alone leader of the Liberal Party, because he's Mr.

00:29:58.980 --> 00:29:59.480

<v SPEAKER\_2>Globalist.

00:29:59.480 --> 00:30:01.000

<v SPEAKER\_2>He personifies globalism.

00:30:01.000 --> 00:30:03.900

<v SPEAKER\_2>He worked for Goldman Sachs, was governor of the Bank of England, etc.

00:30:03.900 --> 00:30:08.340

<v SPEAKER\_2>And then there's Brookfield and the UN and ESG.

00:30:08.340 --> 00:30:34.580

<v SPEAKER\_2>All the kinds of things that would normally get you obliterated in an election are now seen, I think, valued by Canadians as really important, not credentials, experience to have as prime minister of Canada at this completely unimaginable juncture where your closest, where your neighbour and closest ally seems genuinely to be threatening your sovereignty.

00:30:34.580 --> 00:30:45.320

<v SPEAKER\_2>So, I mean, I think what Brzezinski would recommend is what Carney is doing, which is reaching out to other middle powers and building sort of common positions.

00:30:45.320 --> 00:30:50.440

<v SPEAKER\_2>I mean, he's obviously been holding a lot of talks with the British and the French.

00:30:50.440 --> 00:30:53.120

<v SPEAKER\_2>The Germans are very important.

00:30:53.120 --> 00:30:56.340

<v SPEAKER\_2>I think other countries in this hemisphere are very important.

00:30:56.340 --> 00:31:00.260

<v SPEAKER\_2>I haven't heard much about that from Carney yet.

00:31:00.780 --> 00:31:24.000

<v SPEAKER\_2>I hope we will see interesting Mexican-Canadian conversations, because I think what and this is something I'm guessing Brzezinski would recommend too, which is having observed how Trump behaves and how he responds to varying strategies of how to cope with him.

00:31:24.000 --> 00:31:31.740

<v SPEAKER\_2>If you dress like an antelope and you look like an antelope and you walk like an antelope, he will see you as prey and he will eat you.

00:31:33.860 --> 00:31:38.680

<v SPEAKER\_2>His foreign policy is essentially the world is a jungle and we're a big predator.

00:31:38.680 --> 00:31:43.320

<v SPEAKER\_2>So the smaller prey or the smaller predators have to get together.

00:31:43.320 --> 00:31:58.300

<v SPEAKER\_2>And I think that Carney and in a different way, Mexico's Claudia Scheinbaum, show that if you have some resolve, if you have some spine, some principle, he will back off a little bit.

00:31:58.760 --> 00:32:04.020

<v SPEAKER\_2>Not for long, because he's inherently sort of capricious and unpredictable.

00:32:04.020 --> 00:32:06.480

<v SPEAKER\_2>But that is your best hope.

00:32:06.480 --> 00:32:11.420

<v SPEAKER\_2>Hedge against this actually being a permanent shift in the character of America.

00:32:11.420 --> 00:32:29.900

<v SPEAKER\_2>Act as though it is, plan as though it is, by building permanent ties, alliances, trading arrangements, military arrangements, with other like-minded democracies, and hope that you

can do something to bring America back to its senses.

00:32:31.500 --> 00:32:33.480

<v SPEAKER\_1>Ed, thank you.

00:32:33.480 --> 00:32:34.360

<v SPEAKER\_1>Good advice.

00:32:34.360 --> 00:32:35.620

<v SPEAKER\_1>A great biography.

00:32:35.620 --> 00:32:39.500

<v SPEAKER\_1>My final question is, what are you reading or streaming these days?

00:32:41.200 --> 00:32:43.200

<v SPEAKER\_2>Gosh, I'm reading quite a lot of things.

00:32:43.320 --> 00:32:53.780

<v SPEAKER\_2>I had the misfortune, I think, of my book being launched the same day last month that Ron Chernow's biography of Mark Twain was launched.

00:32:53.780 --> 00:33:00.940

<v SPEAKER\_2>I thought, well, you know, I'm going to come second place to that one for sure in terms of biographies of 2025.

00:33:00.940 --> 00:33:03.920

<v SPEAKER\_2>But I am planning to read it because I love Ron Chernow.

00:33:04.160 --> 00:33:09.440

<v SPEAKER\_2>His Hamilton and Washington biographies in particular are really good.

00:33:09.440 --> 00:33:23.260

<v SPEAKER\_2>But I have to carve out the time because there is so much happening as a journalist in Washington, so much happening that what I'm reading and the conversations I'm having is swallowing every spare moment.

00:33:23.260 --> 00:33:30.180

<v SPEAKER\_2>And therefore, my book reading is considerably less than it would ordinarily be, I have to say.

00:33:30.180 --> 00:33:31.280

<v SPEAKER\_1>Well, Ed, I thank you.

00:33:31.280 --> 00:33:40.260

<v SPEAKER\_1>And I strongly encourage all listeners to go out and buy and read Zbigniew Brzezinski, The Life of Zbigniew Brzezinski,



America's Great Power Prophet.

00:33:40.260 --> 00:33:43.960

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00:33:43.960 --> 00:33:52.220

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00:33:52.220 --> 00:33:53.660

<v SPEAKER\_1>I'm Colin Robertson.

00:33:53.660 --> 00:33:55.520

<v SPEAKER\_1>Thanks for joining us today on The Global Exchange.