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BOOK REVIEW: SUPERPOWER: THREE CHOICES FOR AMERICA'S ROLE IN THE WORLD

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BREMMER, I.: *Superpower: Three Choices for America's Role in the World*. London: Portfolio, 2015. 240 p. ISBN 1591847478.

The world today is determined by two significant historical events. The first event is the end of the Cold War, and the second one are the terrorist attacks on the United States. Both of them have had a huge impact on the following development and present global politics. After the Cold War, the United States became the only superpower, which influence and power was unquestionable. The above-mentioned terrorist attacks, however, have changed the character of the American superpower. The book *Superpower: Three Choices for America's Role in the World* by **Ian Bremmer** provides the author's view on this transformation. **Ian Bremmer** is the president and founder of Eurasia Group, the leading global political risk research and consulting firm. He has published nine books, including the bestsellers *The End of the Free Market* and *Every Nation for Itself*.

The reviewed book is a valuable evaluation of the past and the current international situation, structured into six main chapters except the introduction and conclusion. Each chapter starts with a quote of well-known personalities. At the beginning, the author stated that the United States would remain the world's only superpower. A question is which kind of superpower the United States

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would be. That is the question for the next president of the United States. Formulating the answer to this question is the main purpose of this book. From the author's perspective, there are three possible choices. He offers the reader an exam consisting of ten questions and it is up to the reader to choose answers. The significance of these answers is important, because according to them every reader can determine his own opinion regarding the role of the United States in the future.

The first chapter characterises the current world politics. Due to two wars (Iraq and Afghanistan), American reputation was imperfectly perceived by the U.S. citizens and the financial crisis in 2008 harmfully influenced U.S. economy and job market. These events have had an impact on the relationship with the U.S. allies around the world. The author is thinking what it means for the United States and what the next president will have to deal with. Foremost, he emphasizes the importance of China for the health of global economy, but he admits future Chinese turmoil and possibility of Chinese aggression against its neighbours. He also warns the reader that there will be a conflict between Russia and West different from the one of the Cold War and the next president has to be prepared for it. Then he advises the next president to improve damaged relations with Europe and avoid bloody battles. U.S. citizens require from the next president do more at home, for example, to facilitate creation of new jobs, immigration policy, education reform, tax policy and energy policy. Moreover, many powers like Japan, India or China reject the American leadership. These states are built on dissimilar values. However, he believes that these states will not offer the alternative to the U.S. international leadership. He adds that they have to realise that with great influence comes greater responsibility. Consequently, the author mentioned the inheritance of no-strategy of the foreign policy of the United States. President **Barack Obama** did not define the priorities of his administration and he refused to choose. What can the next president do to make U.S. foreign policy stronger? The author's opinion is that the United States should formulate its role that would defend American interest overseas, but it must make the country safer and prosperous. The United States should be setting an example to other countries instead of an effort to transform others to democracies.

The second chapter is dedicated to the analysis of the administrations of the last four presidents, including the current president **Barack Obama**. After the end of Cold War, the New World Order was promoted, which crucial parts were freedom, justice, rule of law and peace. Since 1992, there have been noticeable

cuts in military spending and the United States had to deal with domestic issues, i.e. how to eliminate the federal budget deficit. President **Bill Clinton** held presidency during significantly successful period. His foreign policy goal was to maintain the U.S. leadership. Unfortunately, he wrongly assumed certain things, for instance, he committed the United States to military obligations without understanding his enemies and detailed examination of the alternatives. Furthermore, there was also present his bad assessment of foreign policy and his belief that Chinese growing trade will cause changes in its internal affairs. His successor **George W. Bush Jr.** faced terrorist attacks on the United States that have affected not only American external and internal policy, but also induced significant changes in world affairs. **George W. Bush Jr.** has declared the global war on terror, which is connected with an attempt to punish perpetrators of these attacks. Then, the president **George W. Bush Jr.** led the United States to two unsuccessful wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which were too expensive for the United States. Because of this, the U.S. reputation has been sullied almost everywhere around the world. On the other hand, **George W. Bush Jr.**'s administration helped to improve relations with India and China; he also deepened relations with Sub-Saharan African countries. Contemporary president **Barack Obama** expressed the purpose of his foreign policy in negative terms; his main foreign policy tool was economic statecraft and he focused on Asia. In addition, he tried to improve the relationship with allies in Europe; he worked on the agreement on Iran's nuclear program, and he as well as attempted to improve the international perception of the United States. Similarly to the president **Bill Clinton**, he promised to give more attention to domestic policy issues like health care reform or the federal budget. President **Barack Obama** did not have enough experience in international politics and, therefore, this caused certain relaxation of his commitment to the purposes of his first term. Then, he also participated in international conflicts and he has bewildered his allies, enemies and the U.S. citizens.

The third chapter introduces the reader to the first potential choice – an independent United States. The world nowadays is not the same as it was during the Cold War. It is the world with no defined superpower enemy or with no credible foreign threat to the United States. Despite that, the United States keeps giving more money on its military and somehow they use them. Consequently, it could have bad effects on the U.S. That is why it is crucial for the state to have a balanced budget, because it supports its economic and military strength. Consequently, the question is why the United States should be

a world policeman. It is too expensive, and huge amount of money spent abroad, could be rather spent at home. It is more beneficial for the United States to lead from a distance; a good example of this is Libya. Moreover, what about NATO? Should the United States go to fight to Ukraine or should Americans help Latvia in the case of aggression from Russia? The author argues in favour of careful thinking about it. He offers the reader the opinions of the U.S. citizens, which do not support to provide help. The author also opines that the other states such as Germany should share more of the costs as well. Furthermore, he emphasizes the fact that the United States has no right to push those who do not have the same opinion. The United States also cannot ignore public view and sentiments at home. According to Independent America, the United States must accomplish the following requirements. Firstly, the United States has to return to the ideas of its founders. It has to be the nation with the honour of the individual liberty. The author suggests the new declaration of independence, which may be used by the Americans for claiming emancipation, but not solving every problem. The U.S. must create again a prosperous and secure nation and set an example. Secondly, America has to rationalise military spending and transform its armed forces to be adequate and capable in the 21st Century. Simultaneously, the United States has to rebuild its physical infrastructure and stimulate its growth. There is a need of independence from its own foreign policy. Last thing to do is to involve actively U.S. citizens in learning about it.

The fourth chapter describes the second alternative called "moneyball America", which is originally based on emphasizing concepts of sabermetrics over method that is more traditional. Politically, the USA have to take some costs related to the risks abroad to secure their interests, a good illustration of this can be a leadership of an alliance to stop proliferation of nuclear weapons or protection of global growth. Moneyball foreign policy says that the United States *"have to accept few responsibilities that no one else can, but everywhere possible it shed burdens in favor of opportunities"*. At first, the United States should use own energetic resources and export them too, for example liquefied natural gas. In the case of war, the United States can choose whether fight or not, depending on its will and its terms. Of course, the United States should prefer imposing economic sanctions. Moreover, the United States has to divide the costs and risks among allies, and the Americans have to encourage regional balance of power as well. It underlines the focus on four part of world – East Asia, Eurasia, North Africa and Middle East. To sum up purposes of the

moneyball foreign policy in these regions, the author reminds not only importance of strategic balance of China in East Asia through encouraging Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, Philippines and Indonesia, but also giving a lot of attention to trade and investment there. Similarly, relations with Russia should be controlled by Europe, in the case of Ukraine the United States ought to impose sanction and help allies if they are attacked. Next, they should try to keep good relations with Saudi Arabia and Israel in the Middle East, despite Saudi Arabian – Israeli rivalry. Flexibility is a key value of "moneyball America". This choice is connected with statement that the United States is not exceptional. They should act in a respectful way to others states' interests and if they are even enemies, they should negotiate with them. Another point is that the author expresses his positive attitude towards using drones, because "it offers a low-cost, low-risk method of fight".

The fifth chapter is devoted to the third possibility for the U.S. role in the world. It is an *indispensable America*, whose main idea is global leadership of the United States. According to this choice, the important assumption for the world security is peaceful international environment. The United States is exceptional because it is the only state with the power to ensure a general prosperity. The next point is that the United States is the only state able to promote universal values (democracy, rule of the law, access to information, freedom of speech, human rights) at the global level. The United States must rebuild its power, create new alliances, be ready for new asymmetric threats, and become the world's lead trading state. There is a necessity of strategy. Besides, the United States is persuaded that every nation should become a democracy. In global politics, they should be involved in the rest of world and they have to protect commerce and security. Global economy is decisive for vulnerability of the world as a whole thanks to global economic interdependence. As future goals, there are pointed out the following: fighting terrorism, better managing health crisis and creating coherent policy for the Arctic. Specifically in the relations with Europe, it is emphasized importance of TTIP and NATO. Furthermore, in the relations with Africa the author proposes strengthening and deepening of commercial ties. At for the domestic policy, there is an attempt to reduce their national debt, support educational system or diversify fuel mix.

The sixth chapter returns to the **Obama's** Administration and deals with its foreign policy strategy, or it would be better to say the absence of his strategy. The author contemplates potential benefits related to this absence. On one

hand, this means that the United States and its steps are unpredictable for their enemies. Namely, it helped to defend Taiwan's independence. On the other hand, the enemies can try to test American intentions. In addition, not only enemies but also allies do not know to predict the U.S. steps. They need to have information about U.S. security guarantees and their choices. The United States has to respect article 5 of NATO agreement, thus, they lost its credibility. Therefore, the next U.S. president has to fulfil his commitments. To continue, the author analyses future U.S. choices for Europe, Middle East and East Asia. The essence of future foreign policy in each of these areas of the world is to choose some way and exactly define its purposes and intentions, as well as respect them. At the end of this chapter, the author offers analysis of three scenarios, one of them concerns Egypt and Saudi Arabia, second one examines China, and last one is connected with Syria and Pakistan. His choice for the United States would be independent United States.

In summary, we positively evaluate the book as a whole, because it provides prudent analysis of the world politics with a focus on the U.S. perception. With this in mind, it shows us the real options for the next president of the United States and offers us their understanding. We also appreciate the author's method to examine various scenarios and possibilities and let the reader decide, instead of forcing his own opinion.