

## Katonah Great Decisions: 10/2/12

Discussion of: Strategic Vision by Z. Brzezinski and The World America Made by R. Kagan.

Discussion Leaders: Howard Jacobs and Tyler Beebe

Summary by George Roy

Brzezinski worked for the Democrats during the Carter years and Kagan for the Republicans during the Reagan years so their perspectives and prescriptions are decidedly different. They are both trying to analyze the factors which led to the dominant influence of the US today and the evolution of power in the world to come.

Declinism is a dominant theme of both works.

Does the decline of the industrial strength of the US and its indebtedness to China and OPEC foreshadow its decline in influence? Yet the US still dominates the world in GDP and military power. The US became the dominant economic power at the beginning of the twentieth century and has been the dominant military power since the end of World War II. The US has shaped the world as we know it by our economic and military might and our example in governance.

Our power and example have not been completely hegemonic but on a comparative scale it is compelling. The US has been able to forge international relationships which have maintained relative peace and economic growth since the end of WWII.

If the US does decline significantly who would replace it? Both authors think that there would be a significant realignment with the most likely result being a multi-polar world where power would be shared by Russia, China and the EU.

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