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Geopolitical Expert Ian Bremmer on the Choices America Faces

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Geopolitical expert Ian Bremmer conducted a Q&A about his new book "[Superpower](#)" and America's role in the world on Business Insider's [Facebook page](#) on Thursday.

Bremmer argues in his new book that Washington hasn't had a [defined](#) foreign policy strategy for the last quarter-century, and now it's time for America to take a look at the options and make a choice.

During the [Facebook Q&A](#), Bremmer answered questions about everything from China to Iran. We've rounded up our favorites. Check them out below:

Q: What impact will each of the three choices in your book most likely have on the US-China relationship?

Bremmer: Indispensable is in some sense the riskiest because it's confrontational. US would need to truly step up to Chinese military expansion in the S China Sea, well beyond what we've seen in the last 48 hours. Chinese might back down. Then again..

Independent is risky in that it really sets loose American allies in the region, many of which might decide they need to align themselves with China accordingly.

Moneyball probably the most risk averse path in Asia and with China specifically, in that it's much more economically focused (TPP, Bilateral Investment Treaty, etc) while trying to maintain more or less status quo on security front.

But keep in mind, China's long term development is even more of a question mark than America's foreign policy. Which sets the bar high.

Q: What areas of the world do you see as "undervalued" (i.e consensus is more pessimistic than it should be)?

Japan-China relations today probably the most obvious. But to say something more interesting, I'd also say Iran. As I think we'll get a deal. And yes, it's not a great deal. And yes, they'll probably cheat. And yes,

Congress, the Saudis and Israel will all be incensed. But in 10 years, US Iran relations will probably be closer than those of the US with most Gulf States.

Q: You said in an TV interview that the US intends or intended to spread democracy. Can you prove that? Other sources say that the US has spread more dictatorships. For instance Condoleezza Rice: "For 60 years, my country, the United States, pursued stability at the expense of democracy in this region here in the Middle East."

Bremmer: The US, in principle, supports democracy as a universal value. We saw that very clearly with the creation of the Marshall Plan, the rebuilding of Japan, and the establishment of a post war global architecture (UN, Bretton Woods, IMF/World Bank, etc).

But. Of course, the US also has other interests, which frequently conflict with these universal principles. Both abroad and even at home.

I believe the US has become sufficiently muddled in its international message (post Soviet collapse) that this question now deserves to be addressed head on by the candidates.

Q: Who are the "winners" of the three different paths? Can we identify regions/continents, which would prefer a certain path? Which one is especially good or bad for certain regions?

The most interesting result to me is that older Americans skew heavily toward Indispensable. Younger even more heavily toward Independent. Candidates might want to pay attention to that.

Q: Would you say that USA is a kind of neo-colonial power today with its influence as the only superpower? And would like to know what you think about the military presence US have all over the world.

Bremmer: Certainly most American allies don't view the US that way. The Russians probably do (though they'd like to be a bit more neo-colonial themselves, at least in their neighborhood).

I think the challenge is that many of America's new tools of intervention are themselves more unilateral: drones, cyber, the "weaponization of finance." and that will cause US foreign policy to become more unpopular in those places where it intervenes...even as the general American appetite for intervention decreases.

Q: To what extent was the "weaponization of finance" a happy accident? Low oil and low ruble came at a time when we wanted to punish Putin.

It's absolutely an accident, in the sense that the US hadn't expected it to become such a powerful unilateral tool. How happy it is depends on the circumstance. There's always the potential it can be overused and create backlash that, longterm, undermines American national interest.

I also think low oil may be a problem for the US vis Russia... since it puts Putin into more of a corner. If you think he's likely to compromise/capitulate, that's a good thing. But I'm skeptical.

Q: You seemed to argue at an intelligence squared debate, that the US cannot be the world police anymore. How does this notion fit into your idea of an Indispensable America?

Bremmer: I did argue that (though they assign you the position... and any good debater should be able to analytically handle that).

But I think Indispensable America is becoming much more challenging. US allies are less capable/willing to support. US adversaries are more willing to challenge. And the willingness of the American people to pay the tab in blood and treasure is decreasing. I'd be much more comfortable with Indispensable America if I believed we could actually follow through on it..

Q: I saw you on [Charlie Rose](#) the other night speaking about your new book. My question is-- is there any way the US can be both an indispensable nation and play Moneyball?

Bremmer: Not really. I think they're fairly exclusive paths (read the book!). But I do think that when you a strategy, as challenges emerge, you might find fallback approaches skewing towards a second "favorite" as it were. Hillary tried Moneyball as Secretary of State, that included the Russia pivot. Which didn't work. Her fallback position could have been more Indispensable (hammer down the Russians on Ukraine), or more Independent (let the Europeans take care of it... or not).

Q: Although the book is specifically about the U.S., what role do you see for the EU to play in promoting security and cooperation in the world?

I'm skeptical at least for the near term. The latest British election has confirmed that the UK is going to remain outside of European leadership for the foreseeable future. France is more "periphery" than "core" on economic issues, fundamental to EU structure, even as they are far more assertive geopolitically than Europe's leader Germany. Politically, Europe as a construct is extremely weak today. And the Transatlantic relationship is as well.

Q: How do ASEAN countries balance power from China and USA? I see some conflicts among ASEAN countries in terms of dealing with the rise of China.

Near term, they engage more economically with China, more strategically/militarily with the US. Long term, unless US-China relations get considerably more cooperative, they'll have to start making difficult choices.

Q: How do you think the current sanctions will shape Putin's foreign policy over Central Asian countries?

Probably makes him more pragmatic in the sense that China is now his principal international partner and they are the biggest player in these Central Asian states aside from Russia. So he's going to need to avoid directly challenging them.

Q: Don't you think after the Bush regime America needed the not aggressive Obama style of foreign policy so to speak?

I think Indispensable would have been nearly impossible to put into effect by Obama even if he had been inclined in that direction. But the US would be much better off, if it has a President that wants a softer approach, to be consistent with allies and antagonists in setting that out. No Red Lines that we can't--or won't--actually enforce! Iraq, Syria, N Korea, Iran, Russia/Ukraine, you name it...

Q: Do you think America has a responsibility to protect cultural monuments targeted by ISIS? If so, does the responsibility step from universal values or national interest or both? I ask because we have been near silent toward the Saudis' destruction of their own heritage in Mecca, as well as Azerbaijan's eradication of medieval Armenian cross-stones at Djulfa.

I'd like to believe the US has a responsibility first and foremost to provide safe haven for those that have been displaced by conflict. I've been stunned that after 4 million Syrians have been made into refugees... from more than 3 years of war... the US has taken some 355 in. That seems low to me. If we're not going to do that, I have a hard time focusing on monuments. Though what we are about to see in Palmyra really upsets me. I'm not sure it upsets me more than the extinction of species that we're presently seeing.

Check out Ian Bremmer's new book "Superpower" on [Amazon here](#).