

Book Review

Zbigniew Brzezinski, Central and Eastern Europe under the transition cyclone, Bucharest, Diogenes, 1995, 320 pages

*Alexandra Ionela Pană**

Interrogation, analysis and prediction are the keywords that best describe this book, through which the author treats with professionalism specific phenomena to the end of the cold war. Although not always the forecast presented was confirmed by the subsequent evolution of the events, the work requires consistency and experience.

The book is essentially a collection of the most important studies published during 1989-1995 by Zbigniew Brzezinski, collected, translated and commented by Paul Dobrescu. The international political scientist treats topics such as: the transition of the old communist world to what today is called market economy, the development of relations between Russia and the West and the security future of Central and Eastern Europe. The originality of the book is given on one side by the lucidity in analyzing the transition and managed to break away from adversity recognized to this regime, and on the other side by its

* University of Craiova, Faculty of Law and Social Sciences, MA National and Euro-Atlantic Security, e-mail: ionelaalexandrapana@gmail.com.

forecast character that is addressing issues related to the reaffirming of Russia's imperialist tendencies.

Another strength of the text is the presence of a mixture of interrogations that make us want to read on to find the answers. Zbigniew Brzezinski's experience in the political area gives him authenticity and consecrated him as a valuable point of reference in the literature. Today, 20 years after the publication of the volume, we can see that many of the American analyst forecasts can be confirmed. The paper was published by Diogenes, Bucharest, in 1995, so soon after the Cold War, a period in which the transition of the old communist states were at an early stage. The 320 pages of the book are divided into nine chapters, preceded by introductory words.

In the first chapter, entitled *Towards a common European home* the analyst expresses on the one hand the greeting of the USA about Mikhail Gorbachev's perestroika and on the other hand a personal vision of the ways in which they can build a sustainably common *European home*.

Post-communism nationalism is the name of the second chapter which begins by underlining the growth recorded by the wave of nationalism in Eastern Europe and, in particular, in the Soviet Union. Fine connoisseur of this matter, the author describes this concept, considering that "under Gorbachev the Soviet empire quickly becomes a volcano of peoples"(Brzezinski, 1995:87). Moreover, it presents the breakup of Communist brotherhood illusion because of the national conflicts.

The name of the third section is "*Beyond chaos * A policy toward the West*". The analyst provides the Soviet crisis of long-term on three lines of action: ethnic, economic and political. He also talks about the Central Europe's recurrence in the context in which "today is once again Eastern Europe, Central Europe-what has always been from the historical, cultural and philosophical point of view"(Brzezinski, 1995:129). If 1989 has been regarded as the year of hope, 1990 is the decisive year for cold war's fate.

"*Selective global commitment*" is the title of chapter number four in which Brzezinski argues that the global distribution of power is significantly affected by the acceleration of European unification. In this context, there are complaints of the Soviets, the uncertainty of the relations between them and the Eastern Europeans and the increased possibility of Soviet Union's disintegration.

The fifth chapter entitled "*Order, disorder and the conduct by the USA*" deals with the controversial topic called *new world order*. While Henry Kissinger and James Schlesinger advocates for the USA's superpower status maintenance, Zbigniew Brzezinski also evaluates the limitations of this positions on the international political scene, highlighting the possibility that the situation could be more unstable and dangerous than the cold war. The conclusion reached by the author is that the new world order requires not only the USA help, but also its leadership.

"*The Cold War and its consequences*" is the sixth chapter and deals, as the title suggests, with the immediate consequences of the frozen conflict. But the author is not limited to the consequences, he also describes the war's steps and meditates on the two alternative conceptions about victory.

In the seventh chapter called "*The great transformation*" we can notice the analyst's concerns about the transformation process; the USA response to this, given the "lessons that needs to be acquired by Western policy designed to help and encourage the post-communist transition". Extremely interesting are the three stages of transformation identified by the author.

"*The prematurely partnership*" is the name of the eight study. It contains a critical analysis of the new strategy adopted by the Clinton administration to Russia, whose status wasn't yet defined. "Even in front of textual evidence proving the contrary, Russia's new constitution was welcomed by President Clinton as an example of constitutional democracy"(Brzezinski, 1995: 274). It's used the concept of historical amnesia, which means

that Moscow used Russian colonists as a pretext to justify its claims on the right to intervene.

The last chapter, "*A Plan for Europe*" focus on the issue of NATO enlargement, based on three questions: "What should be the extent of NATO? What should be the role of Germany in Europe after the cold war? What should be the relationship of Europe and NATO with Russia?"(Brzezinski, 1995:295). A final prediction goes to Baltic States and Ukraine.

I conclude by looming that this collection of studies is an original work of forecasts which contains answers to many of our dilemmas approved on the transition of the old communist states to democracy. As a deficit, I can say that during these nine studies the author is considerably focused on the extension of Russia, on its consequences and on USA policy, but attaches less importance to a possible defense strategy for the members directly concerned. The information about risks and threats that jeopardize peace and security are important to each of them, just as are necessary objectives and measures.

Reference:

Brzezinski, Zbigniew (1995). *Central and Eastern Europe under the transition cyclone*, Bucharest: Diogene.

Acknowledgement

This work was supported and financed by the Center of Post-Communist Political Studies - CEPOS STUDENT GRANT 2014 awarded within the Fourth International Conference After Communism. East and West under Scrutiny, 4-5 April 2014, Craiova, Romania.