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334 pages hardcover with unclipped dust jacket, study of international relations by Zbigniew Brzezinski who currently advises President Obama.

Between Two Ages Details

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From Reader Review Between Two Ages for online ebook

Bruno Figares says

Insightful would be an understatement

Praj says

Brzezinski's hope for a technetronic utopia and its Orwellian fear.

In a Jan'2012, Foreign Affairs issue, Brzezinski in his essay '*Balancing the East, Upgrading the West*'; stresses on the fact that in order to retain its supreme position the United States need to revitalize itself domestically as well as internationally in order to promote a larger West and bolster a balance in the Eastern hemisphere to accommodate China's fiery draconic global status. This is certainly, a far cry from Brzezinski's Trilateral Commissions days where he alongside his politically potent coterie emphasized on strong American –Japanese correlation for a stable political environment. I first read this book in 2004, when Thomas Friedman was considered to be at the helm of international politics, Nye's "soft power" concept was gaining momentum and "terrorism" was a pivotal word in the political circles and the PATRIOT ACT appeared like a page from Orwell's doctrinaire to civil libertarians. Brzezinski's philosophical analysis on the advent of scientific stage in life as we experience enhancing political and social reforms revolves around the idea of technology being the pivotal resource of libertine equalization freeing man from social incongruity and forming a global political cohesion of sovereign states.

The third revolution in the American society or as Brzezinski preferred to label it – technetronic age; is a post-industrial Technetronic age phenomenon where scientific aptitude becomes the deciding factor in societal progression. Knowledge is the new "think tank" of social innovations and political stabilizations.

The Technetronic era :- '*a society that is shaped culturally, psychologically, socially and economically by the impact of technology and electronics – particularly in the arena of computers and electronics.*'

The book begins on a sanguine observation the evolution global political process and its effects on domestic and international politics. The comprehensive assessment of the industrial and the post-industrial eras brings a constructive outlook on Brzezinski's ideology of human race needing structure and communal equilibrium to thrive in the burgeoning international political atmosphere. The written text elucidates the onset of an electronically enhanced era that undervalues the archaic industrial age. Knowledge becomes the ultimate power and the mass media its weapon, Widespread and free education may lessen racial segregation, the emergence of television may diminish immunity to foreign problems and the idea of a global village dissolves the concept of "we" and "they". Charts are drawn and statistical graphs are calibrated to specify the rise in mass media communication. The discussion in overcrowding cities leading to pathological and violent is a bit outdated, yet holds true in the current social functioning. The rural to urban shift has been on the rise since the industrial revolution and with the uneven mass to density population equation, the existing tranquil consistency is bound to be disturbed. The apparent rise in urban violence, drug crimes and other related issues has been a determining factor to Brzezinski's concern of overcrowding outburst. However, before 2001, American domestic progress showed a positive census with increase in social prosperity, personal security and vast opportunity asserts the advantage of the technological era. The political and cultural pessimism that followed after September 2001 clearly depicts the problems of a technocratic environment

wavering in the manipulations and false perception of mass media, once again putting American foreign policies in the Lippman's gap whirlpool. (*Lippman's Gap* - "consists in bringing into balance, with a comfortable surplus of power in reserve, the nation's commitments and the nation's power." *If this balance exists, the foreign policy will command domestic support. If commitments exceed power, insolvency results which generates deep political dissension*")

The assertive propagandas expressed in the book may look fruitful, but one fails to see the loopholes in Brzezinski's elitist ambiguous dogma. The debate of "internal man" and "external man" fulfillment stretches to a point of totalitarian madness.

"The possibility of extensive chemical mind control, the danger of loss of individuality inherent in extensive transplantation, the feasibility of manipulating the genetic structure will call for the social definition of common criteria of use and restraint....while the chemical affects the individual, the person is significant to himself and to society in his social context—at work, at home, at play. The consequences are social consequences".

Is Brzezinski inferring that only through the creation of a "zombieland" can science achieve human homogeneity? Potentially, do governing elites need to resort to genetic and chemical alterations of human mind to bring societal equilibrium? This can be however dismissed on the grounds of futuristic possibilities of one man's political buoyancy. Nevertheless, on the domestic front, Brzezinski makes a promising analysis on how the use of advanced scientific intelligence can minimize the gap between governmental and non-governmental institutions, reduce the racial conflicts and promote rationalization of humane values. Techetronic era aligns on equivalent information age planar. Indisputably; America is global identity for excessive personal freedom, homogenous existence and highly advanced in scientific technology. Hubert Vedrine verifies Americans being powerful entities as they can "inspire dreams and desires of others, thanks to the mastery of global images, through film and television and for these same reasons, large numbers of students from other countries come to the United States to finish their studies". The soft power argument persuades the important reality of reinforcing adequacies in political agendas in the current 'information age' analogous to the tangible power of knowledge of Brzezinski's flourishing technetronic era. The argument over the shift from balance of power to global governance falters effectively on the probability of the explosion of counter coalitions lest a leading nation adheres to hegemonic predominance. Brzezinski observation of the new global world lacking identity and cohesion and in need to discover harmonized stability, curtly suggest that globalized homogeneity is still a far fetched dream.

What is westernization to the West , is imperialism to the rest. (Samuel Huntington).

Brzezinski specifies the onset of world-politics and the crucial task of technology in acquiring information of global realities. The 19th century represents the quest for liberty, the 20th century strived on the quest of equality, but what the political analysts fail to foresee was the thirst for identity politics that emerged at the start of the 21st century. Brzezinski's elitist attitude in correlating the usage of technology to lessen social and political fragmentation birthing global homogenous ideologies dangle on a skeptical edge of cultural clash. The escape from freedom v/s escape from reason debate assesses violence clashes and revolutionary rebellion that were ripe during the 1960s and 1970s, were termed as socio-psychological in origin and vaguely moralistic in content. Contrary to what Brzezinski had inferred the world still in chaotic morality distinctiveness.

Brzezinski's utopian analogy comes to an abrupt end when he affirms a possibility of universal homogeneity. The term in itself is flawed as when applied on a global platform that streams of varied tribal cultures; liquefies the idea of a homogenous existence. . Huntington in his cultural epic, "Clash of civilizations" elucidates the modern and post-modern generational discrepancies. The text delineates the dilemma of those whose study abroad in American universities and absorb Western cosmopolitan ideologies and language find themselves in a parallel world compared to the generation who studied in their homeland diluted with the

metropolitan culture and “knowledge is indigenized by means of translations. The problem arises when the former have to find means to assimilated in their parental societies to accommodate their societal values. The resulting insecurities and segregations may not be conducive for the notion of a homogenous world that Brzezinski’s technetronic optimism thrives for. Nevertheless, if applied to domestic policies expectation of a homogenous existence in a multiracial country like the United States sounds more plausible than creating a universal religion which is itself a call for social instability.

Since, this book was written years before the disintegration USSR as a sovereign state, Brzenski’s adherence to socialism seems a natural outcome for his solution to a post-communist world.

“The desire for equality has made most of the leaders of the new stated embrace socialism. They see in socialism a vehicle for ensuring the objectives which most of them shares....flowering of their nations, own distinctive cultures, national economic development and the gradual erosion of internal inequality”.

This is quite puzzling and simultaneously contradicting. At this juncture, Brzezinski favors socialism as a tool to modernize the advancing societies and yet his push for a technologically privileged homogeneity makes the stated doctrine appear nonsensical in a world that may turn into a scientific autocracy dominated by a certain politically influenced “elite”.

“More directly linked to the impact of technology, it involves the gradual appearance of a more controlled and directed society. Such a society would be dominated by an elite whose claim to political power would rest on allegedly superior scientific know how. Unhindered by the restraints of traditional liberal values, this elite would not hesitate to achieve it sends by using the latest modern techniques for influencing public behavior and keeping society under close surveillance and control”.

The question of liberal democracy then arises masking a Orwellian future. An Orwellian The section on Liberal Democracy in this book puts forth an interpretable passage on Revolutionary Activity of the Violent Left, suspecting if Brzezinski had calculated the onset of global terrorism early on in this psychologically philosophized ultramodern vision.

“Revolutionary activity—through terrorism, sabotage, selective assassinations, and urban guerrilla strife—is possible and even likely in the early 1970s. It will come not from the New Left but from its emerging successor—the professionally Violent Left; Not from the idealistic young people who infuse it with zeal and confusion but from those among them who have been hardened, disillusioned, and embittered by their experiences in prisons and penitentiaries”.

The onset of global terrorism:-

"Persisting social crisis, the emergence of a charismatic personality, and the exploitation of mass media to obtain public confidence would be the steppingstones in the piecemeal transformation of the United States into a highly controlled society."

The perennial debate of PATRIOT ACT(TITLE II) ; its application to counterterrorism v/s violation of civil liberties.

"The emergence of a large dominant party, alongside the more narrowly focused and more intensely doctrinaire groupings on the right and the left could accelerate the trend toward such technological managerialism. The inclination of the doctrinaire left to legitimize means by ends could lead them to justify more social control on the ground that it serves progress. The conservatives, preoccupied with public order and fascinated by modern gadgetry, would be tempted to use the new techniques as a response to unrest, since they would fail to recognize that social control is not the only way to deal with rapid social change. The American transition also contains the potential for an American redemption."

The bursting of a methodological utopian equivalence and the predominance of Orwellian hegemonic opprobrium translates Brzezinski's technetronic ideology as an optimistic survival mode for the United States in an illusionary superlative international community while trying to define its national interests. However, this book is not some symbol of hope for policymakers or as the author himself assures for the text not being an exercise in "futurology". Hence, Brzezinski optimism can be seen as a political reverie or a philosophy to crony capitalism and institutionalized democracy. Lastly, as the prose concludes, in technetronic era, philosophy and politics will be crucial as globalization only brings free markets but not cultural homogeneity.

Danijel Brestovac says

Pg. 7- "Human life is reduced to real suffering, to hell, only when two ages, two cultures and religions overlap. . . There are times when a whole generation is caught in this way between two ages, two modes of life, with the consequence that it loses all power to understand itself and has no standard, no security, no simple acquiescence."

- Hermann Hesse, steppenwolf

Pg. 12- Speaking of a future at most only decades away, an experimenter in intelligence control asserted, "I foresee the time when we shall have the means and therefore, inevitably, the temptation to manipulate the behavior and intellectual functioning of all people through environmental and biochemical manipulation of the brain." Thus it is an open question whether technology and science will in fact increase the options open to the individual.

Pg. 32- the crucial breakthrough in the development of human self-awareness on a mass scale came with the great religions-the first universal syntheses that simultaneously expanded man's vision both vertically and horizontally.

Linda Munro says

So, this book may have been a bit outdated, but it was quite interesting.

Reading this book for the first time some forty years after it was written makes the reader wonder....'is it possible that this man could foresee the future?'

Did this man truly understand that moving away from industrialization into the world of technology would change the world as we know it?

One of the astounding statements is as follows: "The technetronic era involves the gradual appearance of a more controlled society. Such a society would be dominated by an elite, unrestrained by traditional values. Soon it will be possible to assert almost continuous surveillance over every citizen and maintain up-to-date complete files containing even the most personal information about the citizen. These files will be subject to instantaneous retrieval by the authorities."

And this was simply the beginning from the man who truly saw what the technological age would bring.....

Colm Gillis says

This book is dense but did get progressively better the more it was read. Brzezinski was able to boil down the complexities of geopolitics - not necessarily in an easy manner - but in a way that demonstrated he had thought about the issues at hand. It's written in a realistic manner. He doesn't say what he thinks or what 'ought to be' but how it appears to him & that is the great strength of the book.

Gary Hardee says

Having been made aware of the connection between the author of this book, the then governor of Georgia Jimmy Carter and David Rockefeller by way of a private meeting that just the three of them had, prior to both the founding of the Trilateral Commission, and Jimmy Carter becoming President and then appointing Zbigniew Brzezinski as head of National Security, I thought it might just be an important book to look into!

The Trilateral Commission is labeled a non-governmental, non-partisan discussion group founded by David Rockefeller in July 1973, to foster closer "cooperation" among North America, Western Europe, and Japan. Founded: 1973. Founders: Zbigniew Brzezinski, Jimmy Carter, David Rockefeller.

Dina says

He is such a bad writer. What happened to expressing thoughts in clear and concise manner.

Matt Knouff says

One must set aside one's own personal beliefs regarding Dr. Brzezinski before reviewing this book. If the rating was for his contributions to foreign policy, it would receive a 1 or 2 star rating, given his influence within the CFR and other councils / commissions, influencing deadly militaristic interventions when diplomacy (or just ignoring the situation) may have been more ethical. I am a mere educator, author / researcher, and software developer, with experience / graduate school education focusing on psychology and management, so what do I really know about geopolitics? Admittedly, not much.

Brzezinski lays out the progression from the industrial to post-industrial age, in a coherent manner. Given this book was written in 1970, we have 48 years of continued progression to measure the veracity of his conclusions -- were they valid and reliable? Yes. On page 238, he discusses the divergence of the liberal left into two main factions, which can be observed at present: the liberals who stand for free speech and what has now been labeled as "libertarian" values, and the so-called "leftists" who want state intervention / control.

This book is rather wordy at times, explaining what is seemingly obvious in complex terms. However, this is understandable as an academic-type, given the requirement for precision of speech in an academic work is much, much greater than colloquial speech. Even with that in mind, still a bit wordy. It's an interesting book for those interested in technological progression and sociopolitics. A must-read for those interested in those

areas.

Peter Podbielski says

First read in 1970; reread 45 years later in 2015.

Old versus new; modern versus tradition; urban versus rural; and sacred versus secular are examples of dynamic processes accompanying the history of human evolution. Each involved a more controlled society. Zbig's technetronic era involves the gradual appearance of a more controlled society underscored by a belief that such a society, dominated by a (well-intentioned) elite and unrestrained by traditional values will assert continuous surveillance over every citizen. This future is our present; what future do our elite envision next?

Hannes Andreas says

Interesting if somewhat outdated. This book was highly useful for my dissertation.

Stranniki says

an experience
