

BOOK REVIEWS

Z. Brzezinski, B. Scowcroft, *America and the World: Conversations on the Future of American Foreign Policy*, Basic Books, New York 2008

The book is a dialogue between two respected figures in American foreign policy: Zbigniew Brzezinski and Brent Scowcroft, both former security advisers and significant policy observers.¹ These authors have complex worldviews so the book could be incomprehensible, in some aspects, for somebody not interested in foreign policy. However, in the words of the authors, we can detect an authorial need to engage with the reader to find a common language.

The moderator of the discussion is David Ignatius, Washington Post columnist, whose provocative questions do not allow either Brzezinski or Scowcroft to get away with truisms. The dialogue is unscripted, a conversation that includes many political suggestions but also anecdotes from meetings and travels. The readers of this book, as Ignatius believes, can imagine that they are sitting around the conference table and listening to opinions and conclusions. The book is not a compendium of knowledge, but a compilation of ideas and propositions that could be helpful to better understand international relations.

The discussion took place in spring 2008 in Washington; the authors hoped it could serve as a guide for the new president to rebuild American foreign policy. They believed that America's status as a superpower had arrived at a historic turning point.

¹ Zbigniew Brzezinski, formerly President Carter's National Security Adviser, is a counsellor and trustee at the Center of Strategic Studies and International Studies, and professor of the Johns Hopkins University. Brent Scowcroft served as National Security Adviser to Presidents George H. W. Bush and Gerald Ford, and as Military Assistant to President Nixon. David Ignatius writes a twice weekly column for The Washington Post. He was previously executive editor of the International Herald Tribune. Both Z. Brzezinski and B. Scowcroft represent the realist school of international relations, but the former is Democrat and the latter Republican.

The starting point for the conversation is the authors' belief that the world is changing in fundamental ways. They discuss the challenges facing the US today and suggest that the main problems concern the Middle East, China, transatlantic relations, Russia, the Far East, the proliferation of WMD and globalization. Scowcroft emphasizes that after the Cold War America faces not global danger, but hundreds of pinprick problems. The new reality requires a different mindset to deal with dispersed turbulence.

Brzezinski also observes that the world is dominated by three main changes: global political awakening, a shift in the centre of global power and the loss of transatlantic domination, and the surfacing of common global problems.

Both authors agree that the international situation is so complicated that the USA ought to be interested in shaping coalitions of states that share a responsible interest in solving these problems and not determine participation entirely on the basis of whether or not the states concerned are democracies.²

The authors describe in this book some aspects of the Cold War's secret history. They agree that the Cold War is over and America needs to adjust to a new changing environment. However, they are also afraid that a Cold War mindset persists among American policymakers.

The main part of the book refers to the situation in the Middle East, especially the war in Iraq. Both authors were against American intervention and warned that the conflict would degrade international cooperation against terrorism. They also agree that the situation in Iraq is complicated and American troops should be withdrawn. Scowcroft, however, believes that it should be done only if the situation is stabilized. He says "Bin Laden made clear his attack was not against the United States per se. The terrorist wants to drive us out of the region because he thinks the governments in the region are corrupt and need to be overthrown and we're protecting them".

Brzezinski, on the other hand, is convinced that the American presence should be ended as quickly as possible. Scowcroft argues that rapid withdrawal could provoke instability in the region.

The authors agree that the conflict in Iraq destabilized the situation and changed the psychology of this fragile region, and influenced the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians. Scowcroft suggests that both governments (in Israel and in the Palestinian Authority) were weak enough to be forced to cooperate and it was a missed opportunity.

Both authors emphasize that the war on terror would have a negative influence on the American economy and prestige. They criticize Bush's administration's policy, especially that practised between 2001–2004. They

² Z. Brzezinski, B. Scowcroft, *America and the World...*, p. 232.

also pay attention to Iranian foreign policy. Brzezinski's basic position is that Iran became more powerful because it supported Hamas, Hezbollah, Shia in Iraq, and became more anti-Semitic. It is a defeat for America, because Iran, for a long time, was Israel's natural ally.

The discussion also focuses on East Asia. Both authors realize that in the XXI century the greatest challenge for the USA is China's foreign policy. Scowcroft is convinced that the Chinese leadership fears instability. Both authors agree that the relations with Beijing are strategic, but complicated. Brzezinski, for example, says that if America lectures the Chinese about the Tibetans they are likely to say "What about your problem with the blacks? What about the injustice in America. What about the disparities in income which are getting wider".³

The authors believe that America must actively create the international order and this is the most important task for the new president. Brzezinski says that "for the first time in history all of the world is politically activated and this is the challenge for the new administration". Scowcroft adds that the U.S. should and can exercise enlightened leadership in world politics, because only Washington is ready to be a guiding light. They believe that it needs to create new strategies because those employed to win conflicts in the twentieth century are no longer work. It looks like Brzezinski and Scowcroft want to restore a confident America because they believe that the nation has become frightened in the age of terrorism.

The book contains many interesting opinions on international organizations, especially NATO and the UN. The authors agree that people are trying to deal with a new world by using institutions which were not built for this new world order. That is why the organizations must be reformed. They notice that America, during the Bush presidency, missed an opportunity to build a new treaty regime. They attempt to prove that hard power cannot be used to promote democracy and liberal order.

Scowcroft observes, in American history, three general trends related to democracy. The first, the Washington–John Quincy Adams trend describes Americans as like a shining city on the hill and as believing that democracy was the way to go. The second began with Woodrow Wilson who found the Washington Adams foundation too constraining and believed Americans needed to be evangelizers of democracy. The third takes place after 9/11 with the Iraq war and constitutes an emendation of the Wilsonian ideal. It is an American goal or mission to spread democracy, even by force if necessary. He also suggests that democracy sometimes turns against American interests. For example, in the free election in 2005 the Palestinians chose Hamas.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 132–133.

The book reflects long and in-depth thinking about difficult subjects. The individual chapters succeed in showing the reader the changes in key international problems. The book represents the best standards of scholarship and posits many important questions in a global perspective. It is a good read for anyone interested in international relations and American foreign policy.

Małgorzata Rączkiewicz

Jeff Gill, *Essential Mathematics for Political and Social Research*, Cambridge University Press, New York 2006, pp. 448.

Quantitative research methods play a significant role in advanced political analysis. Even though great importance is attached, especially in comparative politics, to mathematical and statistical tools, there are few books concerning mathematical methods that are directed specifically at political scientists. There are, however, some important exceptions. One of them is *Essential Mathematics for Political and Social Research* published by Cambridge University Press, which is a good handbook for political scientists concerned with quantitative analytical methods. The book covers essential topics useful for advanced research, especially in fields such as electoral studies, party politics or the dynamics of democracy. Jeff Gill's book is a successful attempt to explain maths with many examples addressed directly to political scientists. The book prepares political scientists for more advanced studies with the application of statistical and mathematical methods. Moreover, the book allows students to understand that mathematics is of great importance in political analysis.

The first chapter covers some fundamental topics, like elements of logic and the definition of a function. In particular, the concept of a function is of great importance for both natural and social scientists. The second chapter is a concise explanation of some basic problems of analytic geometry. The third and fourth chapters, covering the fundamentals of linear algebra, constitute a comprehensive guide to some very important ideas of modern mathematics. In the next two chapters, the author presents elements of scalar and vector calculus. The calculus is a powerful tool that contributed greatly to the development of natural sciences. The last three chapters cover topics concerning probability, random variables and correlation analysis, all very important for political and social scientists. Unfortunately, too little space is devoted to regression analysis, one of the basic research tools of contemporary social sciences.

Most of the topics are well explained. Moreover, there are many examples concerning politics. In sum, Jeff Gill's book is a useful guide for political scientists who apply statistical methods to measure political phenomena.

The book has its shortcomings, too. In electoral studies, political scientists use many coefficients that are based on mathematical distance functions. However, in the book the mathematical concept of distance and similarity was omitted. First of all, the idea of Euclidean metric is an indispensable tool to understand most of the indices of electoral proportionality, such as the Gallagher index or the Loosemore-Hanby index. I would suggest that the various concepts of distance function and their application in electoral studies be included in the next edition of the book.

Besides, there are far fewer examples in the book than, for instance, in similar books for physicists and economists. In addition, some topics are explained better in other books. However, inasmuch as most books concerning applied mathematics do not contain examples appropriate for political scientists, Jeff Gill's work is exceptional and well worth reading.

Michał Pierzgałski