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Brzezinski and Huntington: Political Power: USA/ USSR

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REVIEWS

POLITICAL POWER: USA/USSR. By Zbigniew Brzezinski and Samuel P. Huntington. New York: Viking Press, 1964. Published under the auspices of the Russian Institute of Columbia University and the Institute of War and Peace Studies. Pp. 461. \$7.50.

THIS is a stimulating study by two creative and productive young political scientists. Professor Brzezinski is the author of several important works on Soviet and Eastern European politics. Professor Huntington is a leading specialist in the field of civil-military relationships. This book, the authors explain in their preface, "is completely a joint product."¹ Unlike many such efforts, this one is highly successful, especially in its unusual and well-integrated structure.

It is in many ways a pioneer work. In the first place, the study attempts to answer the question whether or not the American and the Soviet political systems will "evolve" separately or "converge" and eventually achieve a common pattern. This question is posed in the Introduction and is presumably the guiding principle of the selection and analysis of material throughout the study; the authors return explicitly to it in their Conclusion. Between the Introduction and the Conclusion, there are nine chapters, four of which are devoted to a comparative analysis of the two political systems. The remaining five are "case studies" in what the authors entitle "The Dynamics of Power" and sub-title "Responses to Common Crises." Slightly less than ten percent of the total number of pages of the book is devoted explicitly to the basic theme of "convergence *versus* evolution." In each of the nine chapters which constitute the bulk of the study approximately equal attention is given to the Soviet and the American systems.

It is obvious from the foregoing that Brzezinski and Huntington have attempted a complex and ambitious task. In a sense, this study is three studies in one. It is an essay in trend analysis. It is also a kind of cross-sectional comparison of two political systems. Finally, it presents historical-analytical studies of a series of important events. In fact, it is more than all of this. The authors have applied in their comparative analysis some fairly new concepts and categories, to some of which they have given new labels. Their over-all approach is within the framework of "political system analysis," developed by political scientists such as David Easton and Gabriel Almond. Within this framework they make use of the categories and concepts of "political socialization," which in the case of the Soviet Union they call "politization," the comparative study of elites — using the terms of "political leadership" and "decision-making."

Perhaps at this point it would be useful to the reader to list the topics attacked in the nine substantive chapters. The titles of these chapters are, respectively: "Political Ideas and Politics"; "The Political System and the

1. P. xi.

Individual"; "Political Leadership"; "Power and Policy"; "The Struggle for Power"; "The Ambivalence of Power" (analyzing the ways in which Krushchev and Kennedy each dealt with the issues of "consumer goods" and "civil rights"); "The Intractable Problem of Power: Agriculture"; "Civil Power in Political Crisis: Zhukov and MacArthur"; and, finally, "Foreign Dilemmas of Power."

Methodologically and terminologically this study is somewhat eclectic. The authors have sought to bring to bear upon the data they assemble much of the best contemporary work on organizational behavior, comparative government, small groups, and other pertinent topics. However, the authors did not opt for any single interpretive scheme or vocabulary. Still — and this is the strongest point of their study — they do have a coherent scheme of organization and they do subject the data to a rather rigorous pattern of treatment. They explain their theoretical approach by pointing out in the Introduction that "Political systems should not be studied in terms of barren institutional comparisons," or in terms of "abstract categories of comparison so rarefied as to be drained of practical relevance."² They believe that what "really counts" in a political system are the "strengths and weaknesses" of the system studied. And while indicating their value preferences at the outset, the authors avoid a moralizing tone and strive mightily to achieve objectivity. They apparently are seeking not merely to contribute to the advancement of knowledge but also to provide orientation for policy-makers; hence their pointed selection of topics suggested by the chapter headings. Wisely, they do not seek to deal with all of the major problems of the two systems. Yet some readers may regret the absence of any comprehensive treatment of the significance for the development and possible fate of the two nations — and the world — of the arms race and related issues. They also deal only peripherally with problems of nationality.

Bold and able pioneers such as Brzezinski and Huntington deserve credit for tackling the formidable tasks undertaken by this book. Those who criticize them must ask themselves whether they would have had the courage to tackle such a project or the skill and endurance to accomplish it as well as have Brzezinski and Huntington. Many of the problems upon which they comment have thus far defied the best efforts of statesmen. For example, they discuss the role of nuclear weapons strategy as a problem of "alliance-management" between France and the United States and between Communist China and the Soviet Union, and in the course of this relatively brief discussion they criticize the mistakes and shortcomings of all four governments and of all four heads of state and several other major figures. They do not, however, except perhaps by implication, say what they think would have been better policies than the ones which were actually followed. As might be expected in view of the general framework of the book, they conclude this often provocative discussion by asserting that "Factors peculiar to the American and the Soviet political systems were of

2. P. 4.

decisive importance in shaping the character of the two disputes, in delaying adequate responses, and in aggravating the misunderstandings with allies."³

We are getting a bit ahead of ourselves here, but let it be said that the above quotation and the argument which it includes are typical of the strengths and weaknesses of this book. It boldly and often perceptively identifies significant problems and issues. As a rule, however, it tends to impose upon the data the structure and the point of view congenial to the authors, rather than deriving from the data new and unexpected conclusions or interpretations. This is by no means always the case. For example, the sections dealing with Soviet agriculture contain some startlingly speculative observations. Contrary to what has hitherto been the expert consensus, the authors express the opinion that collectivization of Soviet agriculture did not facilitate industrialization. There are a considerable number of other examples of original or — depending upon one's point of view — unorthodox interpretations; for the most part, however, the considerable originality of this study derives more from its boldness in addressing major issues and from novelty of arrangement than from new facts or subtlety of interpretation.

This reviewer finds himself in agreement, on the whole, with the Brzezinski-Huntington skepticism regarding the likelihood of "convergence" of the Soviet and the American systems. It is questionable, however, whether the authors have selected the best possible framework of analysis for the achievement of their professed objective. They have tried to prove, or at least to indicate, that both the Soviet and the American systems are strong and successful, and therefore that both systems will continue to behave in the future more or less as they have behaved in the past. As they put it in the final sentence of the study, "The evolution of the two systems, but not their convergence, seems to be the undramatic pattern for the future."⁴ What sensible person can quarrel with this sensible conclusion? Certainly not this reviewer, although he feels that perhaps Brzezinski and Huntington have not fully faced up to some of the implications of an indefinite continuation of the kind of rivalry between the two systems which the authors seem to assume.

Most of the study is devoted to examination of the sometimes surprisingly similar but more often distinctively different ways in which the two systems have dealt with such problems as staffing the upper echelons of their political bureaucracies or inducting their citizens into the political system. The often excellent discussion of these problems contributes only indirectly to predictions as to how they will be handled in the future.

As an example, the authors find that in selecting political leaders, except for the top position, the Soviet system achieves greater regularity and continuity than does the American. Partly as a result of this fact, but mainly because of the monopoly of power enjoyed by the Communist Party and the distinctive system of elite training developed by the party, Soviet political

3. P. 407.

4. P. 436.

leadership appears to have a more "professional" character than its American counterpart, although the authors believe that American leadership is becoming more "professional." The superior training of the Soviet political bureaucracy is seen as a factor of strength in the Soviet system. The authors appear to assume that the relatively stable methods of filling top executive positions in the Soviet Communist Party established since the death of Stalin will continue into the future. Although Professor Brzezinski stressed in an earlier work, *The Permanent Purge*,⁵ the role of terror in the struggle for political power in the Soviet Union, he now tends to play down this aspect of the Soviet system, once regarded by American political scientists as perhaps its most distinctive trait.

Balancing what is presented as a Soviet advantage is the corresponding American advantage of having "a regular procedure for replacing its top political leader at least once every eight years and possibly every four years."⁶ As Brzezinski and Huntington remark, "This is one of the most important ways in which the American Political System is more stable and effective than that of the Soviet Union."⁷

Apart from the highly original and somewhat controversial chapter on "Foreign Dilemmas of Power," perhaps the most brilliant chapter in the book is the one on "Power and Policy." One of the theses the authors advance is that while in the United States there is a considerable separation between the processes of policy-making and those of acquiring power, in the Soviet Union "no real distinction exists between the processes."⁸ For this reason, they opine, Americans have written very little about policy-making in the Soviet Union. They then proceed to discuss the implications of the fact that in the American system "the focus of policy-making is the interaction between the President and his administration on the one hand, and the leadership of Congress, the governmental bureaucracies, industry, labor and agriculture on the other," while "in the Soviet Union, in contrast, the relations between the central political leadership and these other elite groups is [sic] more one of control and of manipulation than of bargaining."⁹ This is not very novel, but the discussion of group access to policy-making and of relations among participants in the policy process which follows is very clear and quite fascinating. The authors here present interesting material on the way in which some important Soviet decisions, including the reforms of industrial organization in 1957 and of education in 1958, were made. For their framework of analysis of comparative decision-making they draw on the writings of Harold Lasswell and other political scientists, as well as on the thinking of top-level

5. BRZEZINSKI, *THE PERMANENT PURGE; POLITICS IN SOVIET TOTALITARIANISM* (1956).

6. P. 182.

7. P. 182.

8. P. 191.

9. P. 193.

American government officials such Paul Nitze. Typical of their tendency to combine novelty of presentation with caution in interpretation is their conclusion to this chapter in which they assert that "Whether these innovations were adequate is a question which cannot be answered here. At least, it can be said that each system was able to make some major changes in its environment."

Much other evidence from this study could be adduced to demonstrate how its description of the ways, similar and dissimilar, in which Russia and America deal with their fundamental political problems of keeping the body politic alive and making vital policy choices builds up in the reader a sense of the power and permanence of these two great systems. However, in terms of some of the expectations to which such a study inevitably gives rise, disappointments as well as satisfactions await the reader. The most questionable aspect of this book is its failure to supply a comprehensive, systematic framework for the identification of trends and their projection into the future. To be sure, such an effort of forecasting would be immensely difficult. Many scholars might say that it would be foolhardy. Brzezinski and Huntington have, however, invited their readers to demand a more convincing demonstration than is offered for their apparent certainty that "evolution" rather than "convergence" will be the pattern of the future. They seem not to face up to the possibility that "evolution" itself could conceivably lead to "convergence." They might at least have attempted a more systematic trend analysis in some parts of the study than they have. For example, the chapter on "Political Ideas and Politics" would have afforded an excellent opportunity for the use of some scheme of either qualitative or quantitative content analysis designed to identify and measure trends in the use of key symbols and to discover correlations between these trends and other variables. It is, of course, much more difficult to set up any sort of trend series in connection with some of the other data analyzed, such as personnel. This is particularly difficult on the Soviet side, where statistical data are so lacking. One of the strong points, incidentally, of the authors' discussion of leadership is that they do supply a considerable amount of data on such matters as the political education of Soviet leaders and on the education, institutional connections, occupations, etc., of leaders in the two systems, especially in the Soviet system. Very interesting also are such tables as the one entitled "Major Policy Innovations, 1945-1963," in which achievements of the Soviet Union and of the United States are compared graphically.¹⁰

While this study is much more concerned with the apparent stability of the two systems than with the changes that have occurred in them, it does offer many interesting observations regarding past innovations and possibilities of future changes. For example, the authors suggest that Soviet "technocrats" might borrow some of the planning techniques which have been developed in

10. P. 231.

France under de Gaulle. There is an interesting discussion of the possibility that the Soviet elite may be able to utilize social science for manipulating its "masses." However, as Ralph K. White recently indicated in the *Public Opinion Quarterly*,¹¹ social science is for the totalitarian state a potentially disturbing as well as useful instrument.

Although it often embellishes the obvious, this study even more often forces the reader to re-examine familiar assumptions. In particular it should shake American complacency. It is to be hoped that it will be widely read, for it is a solid, a challenging, and in some ways a distinguished book. No conscientious reader will emerge from it without re-examining many of his conceptions and prejudices about the two major political systems. By raising the somewhat artificial issue of convergence *versus* evolution the book may promise more than it — or perhaps any other book — can deliver in the present state of our knowledge; still it is one of the most substantial contributions to the study of comparative politics to appear for some time. It will play a useful part in the current effort being made by some scholars to lift comparative politics above the level of a rather sterile taxonomy. Works such as this can do much to overcome the parochialism which still to some degree plagues the study of comparative and international politics. Also, continued efforts of this kind can function to focus attention upon important issues, thus contributing, if not necessarily to consensus, at least to improvement in the quality of debate and discussion of public policy.

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A REASONABLE DOUBT. By Jacob W. Ehrlich. Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1964. Pp. 297. \$4.95.

J. W. EHRLICH is not only a famous trial lawyer¹ and the model for television's *Sam Benedict* series, he is also a prolific writer. *A Reasonable Doubt* is his tenth publication. Although earlier writings reflect an astonishing breadth of subject-matter — ranging from the jury system to the Bible to the rather possessively entitled *Ehrlich's Blackstone*, *Ehrlich's Criminal Law*, and *Ehr-*

11. White, *Social Science Research in the Soviet Bloc*, 28 *PUB. OPIN. Q.* 20 (1964).
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1. As of April, 1955, Ehrlich had tried a total of fifty-five murder cases; of these, forty-one resulted in outright acquittals, twelve in manslaughter convictions only, and two in second-degree murder verdicts. Ehrlich's cases have involved such celebrities as Billie Holiday, Sallie Rand, Gene Krupa, and Howard Hughes. More recently, Ehrlich has defended "beat" publisher, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, who was indicted for selling the allegedly pornographic *Howl and Other Poems*, by Allen Ginsberg. An account of the trial is contained in Ehrlich, *Howl of the Censor* (1961).

Over nine years have passed since the publication of Ehrlich's biography: Noble & Averbuch, *Never Plead Guilty* (1955). The biography casts Ehrlich as a hero larger than life.