

Good example of the age of the unthinkable report

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Book report: the Age of Unthinkable

Joshua Cooper Ramo – one of the partners of the Kissinger Associates in its Beijing department, who at the World Economic Forum was called ‘ a leading China’s scholar’, presented a completely new understanding of modern and fast-moving world. His conception known as the theory of ‘ the age of surprise’ was reflected in his book ‘ The Age of Unthinkable: Why the New World Disorder Constantly Surprises Us and What We Can Do about It’.

The book was published in 2009 and was positively accepted by the target readers and critics. In spite of such deep and controversial topic as today’ s reality to look into, the book can be referred to easy reading as the author presents interesting points of view, draws curious parallels and gives an account of provocative thoughts in a light and anecdotal way.

As the starting point Ramo takes the recent study in which hundreds of specialists in various subjects like politics, economics and foreign policy were asked to predict what the nearest future holds. A comparison with the representatives of fauna – a fox and a hedgehog was made, bringing out the thought that the first ones are more likely to respond to changes due to their willingness and curiosity to take them, while second ones are more prone to stick to the existing course of events. In other words, the author emphasizes the necessity to get rid of out-of-date assumptions and to find the creative revolutionary approaches in order to fit in the new, complex and demanding world.

Joshua Ramo claims that today’s fast-moving and rapidly changing world demands completely new strategies to be able to cope with the flow of alternations. He turns to the theory put forward several decades ago by a

physicist Per Bak. According to the scientist's suggestion a pile of sand will be likely set off to an avalanche, if grains of sand are added to it for some time. The worst is that, no matter how closely the whole experiment is watched, it is unknown which concrete grain will cause the movement. If to transmit this theory to the modern-day situation it is hardly possible to find out which minor event will cause drastic changes making quite stable systems react in an unpredictable way.

It is interesting to note that the author gives examples of the sand piles which were made to move. He draws the reader's attention to the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 or the Great Depression in 1929. In other words, Ramo makes it clear that all the turning point changes happened not steadily and smoothly but in sudden leaps leading to catastrophic consequences.

The Kissinger directing manager offers his way of solving the problem of the sand pile. First of all, he suggests that the leaders should create flexible societies strongly tied inside. What is more important, according to his point is that the leaders are to be able to work out the ways to cope with problems that mostly deals with context not finding simple answers. He indicates that in the era of high technologies even the highest fence cannot protect the fortress. And finally, he appeals to people to be not the architects but the gardeners of their own life (Ramo).

All in all, the book is worth reading for those who wants to look at the modern world from a completely different angle.

Works cited

Joshua Cooper Ramo. ' The Age of Unthinkable'. New York: Little, Brown and Company,
2009. Print