

***Harald Barrios, Martin Beck, Andreas Boeckh, Klaus Segbers (eds.): Resistance to Globalization: Political Struggle and Cultural Resilience in the Middle East, Russia, and Latin America***

*Münster, Hamburg, London: LIT Verlag, 2003, vi + 178 pages, ISBN: 3-8258-6749-8 (pbk).*

Globalising the “rest of the world” is a challenging task at the time of general controversy over globalisation’s transformations – amplifying uniformity across the world’s regions culturally, politically, and economically. This volume, issued in 2003, demonstrates that globalisation has gone a great distance, entering and probing the pores of the “developing societies”. The book’s method centres around explorations of the forms of globalisation and attempts at resistance, or as a minimum, resilience to globalisation, in the Middle East, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Egypt, Russia and Latin America (Venezuela and Brazil).

As indicated by editors Andreas Boeckh and Harald Barrios in their introduction “Resistance to Globalization: A Comparison of Three World Regions”, the volume, which is the outcome of a conference, encompasses articles and studies written by political scientists, economists, and geographers of various levels and sources of “resistance to globalization” by political scientists, economists, and geographers. Unfortunately, the editors overlooked giving other details about the conference which gathered these experts; as a result we are denied information about its time, place and occasion. Using the word “resistance” according to a double meaning, as an “active, intentional resistance to tendencies rejected on political and moral grounds by presenting alternative discourses and concepts founded in specific cultural and national traditions” (p. 3), or as a resilience “in a sense that traditional patterns of development and politics are resistant to change” (p. 4), they try to show how such processes vary and the results of globalisation are very different across regions. For practical reasons, this volume is organised in three parts, according to the spotlighted region. While correctly indicating that the frequency of globalisation as a term has almost “beaten [it] to death by overuse”, the editors insist on the uniqueness of the subject of their conference, which focuses on empirical findings showing highly differentiated patterns of globalisation in different regions. The adjustments are made both ways – countries are remoulding to the requirements of the globalised world, and globalisation impulses are adjusting to regional, national and sub-national economic and political patterns.

In the opening article Martin Beck gives, as he calls it, a “mainstream research on globalization” in the Middle East, a region which has been fairly neglected by the general research done on globalisation. Examining the development of its three major indicators – the spread of internet hosts, the growth of exports, and the development of FDI – in comparison with other world regions, and considering the background of authoritarian regimes and “petrolism”, he seeks to explain intra-regional differences, and the influence of political and cultural factors on perceptions of globalisation as a threat.

Beyond the challenging title “Globalization as one way street? The case of the Islamic Republic of Iran” emerges a study of “the only country in world where Islam has officially become the foundation of the society and the government” (p. 41). Henner Furtig goes as far as 1979/80, during the Iranian revolution, to explain the ideas and credo of its leader, Ayatollah Khomeini: “Rely on the culture of the Islam, resist Western imitation, and stand on your own feet” (p. 35) as pan Islamic and anti-globalist. In opposition to the West, “the dominant global power responsible for all the existing injustices, inequalities and misfortunes in the world” (p. 47), and at the same time rivalling the East and communism, Iran promotes a revitalised and politicised Islam as the one and only alternative for every true Muslim, consequently becoming an Islamic “counter-globalisation” force, which “deserves its name since it is directed at the entire globe” (p. 48).

In her essay, Sonja Hegasy concentrates on the debate on cultural globalisation from the Arab perspective, trying to deal with the usage of the terms McDonaldisation, Marlborosation and Dollarisation (in other words, Americanisation), as the reality emerging from globalisation, as suggested by Sherif Hetata in his article “Dollarization, Fragmentation, and God”.<sup>1</sup> This is actually Hegasy’s attempt to debate with Hetata on consumerism, on the aggressiveness of the West in creating global culture, global needs and values, and his idea of self-exclusion from the Global Village as a form of resistance to globalisation.

In her case study of Egypt, Ivesa Lubben studies the idea of morality as a central notion in the Egyptian discourse at the turn of the millennium, a development which can also be extended to other Middle East rentier-states. Lubben investigates the changing notions and dilemmas of Egyptian society, which has found the best strategy for dealing with globalisation by using morality – and not just any morality, but the sexual morality defined by Foucault.

The second part of the book, called “Russia”, explores in four essays the non-transparency and globalisation in Russia, beginning with “Russia’s unwritten rules” (Alena V. Ledeneva), moving on to an analysis of globalisation as an intellectual puzzle in the discourses and practices of the Russian Elites in “Eurasianism”, perhaps the strongest anti-globalist intellectual stream (Andray S. Makarychev), then elucidating the process of anti-globalisation under transformation and the administrative barriers in the Russian economy at the turn of the millennium (Andrei Shastitko), and finally outlining the socio-economic cleavage of “open” and “closed” Russian regions and their specific modes of resistance to globalisation (Natalie Zubarevich). This section analyses in-depth the different levels of Russia’s post-soviet society and the struggle of political and economic actors to find ways to cope with the global market, global competition, and the urge to confront globalisation. The section thereby presents a striking portrait of a society torn between resistance and adaptation. In Russia individual forms of globalisation diffuse from leading city-centres to the periphery, which display somewhat vague and shifting borders, depending on institutional barriers, incomes and the extent of modernisation.

In the two final essays the authors study two cases in Latin America. Andreas Boeckh (one of the editors of the volume) examines Venezuela and its painful (in an almost literal meaning of the word) transition, caused by the difficulty of

its rentier state status, and the interaction between the globalisation and neopopulist regression there. Then Jorg Faust writes about Brazil and globalisation with its federal circumstances. The different political currents and reforms, old economic rules, corruption, and international players like OPEC, the IMF and World Bank have created grounds for both disaster as well as for improvement in the new democracies and market economies of Latin America.

The highlighting of the effects on globalisation of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks by many authors is somewhat eye-catching: From Sonja Hegasy suggesting that the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks were the result of globalisation perceived as cultural imperialism (p. 65), to Henner Furtig implying the contradiction in the condemnation by the president, minister for foreign affairs, and the entire cabinet of the Islamic Republic of Iran “immediately after the terrorist attacks against the visible symbols of economic and financial as well as military might of the most powerful Western country” (p. 34).

Similarly important is the tone of most authors (with one or two exceptions), which is startling in either promoting or at least defending globalisation, and there is a visible tendency to wards underestimation and mockery in discussing the anti-globalisation movement, its ideas and followers. In this regard even the title of the book is somewhat misleading. If by *Resistance to Globalization* one expects more anti-globalisation rhetoric, here we have more pro-globalisation views instead. The only style-related difficulty for the “non-expert” reader is the extensive usage of economic terms in some of the essays, although clearly this is aimed at providing a more credible analysis.

This is a biased yet very informative volume. The volume’s less than 180 pages offer economic and statistic figures, political and economic analyses, and information and facts about the Middle East, Egypt, and Iran, Venezuela and Brazil. A deep and thorough analysis of many aspects of Russia, a gigantic and complex country, caps the wealth of information provided. Furthermore, the authors all make great use of references, demonstrating their serious and analytical approach to the issue.

The essays answer at a grand scale the questions posed by the editors in the introduction, concerning the different degrees and patterns of integration for three very different regions (Latin America, the Middle East and Eastern Europe). The essays de facto contradict the assumption of rapid homogenisation across different types of economies and political systems, with which the globalisation is usually charged. On the other hand, the book studies whether we are ‘already dealing with some kind of anti-global backlash, emphasising regional and national idiosyncrasies’ (p. 3), as the editors (Boeckh/Barrios) postulate. Hence, this book is immensely useful for those researching and studying economical and political developments in the regions of interest, and furthermore as a guide to the march of globalisation in the world in general.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Hetata, Sherif (1998), “Dollarization, Fragmentation, and God”. In: F. Jameson and M. Miyoshi (eds.), *The Cultures of Globalization*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 273–290.