

Olsztyn, June 22, 2016

Prof. dr hab. Arkadiusz Żukowski
Institute of Political Science
University of Warmia and Mazury
in Olsztyn

Review of a doctoral dissertation by Abdellateef M. Al-Weshah, MA, entitled “US Foreign Aid towards Democracy Promotion in the Middle East 2003-2013: A Case Study of Egypt, Iraq, and Jordan”, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Faculty of Political Science and Journalism, Poznań 2016, pp. 335 (Supervisor Prof. Dorota Piontek).

State international policy is assigned particular significance in international relations. At present, the state continues to be the major actor shaping international relations and it increasingly often uses what is named ‘soft power’ in relations with its international surroundings. Global powers are particularly eager to apply this tool, including the United States first and foremost. The US administration has endeavored to use soft power in order to foster democratization processes, which is conspicuously exemplified in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), including Poland. The issue of the US promoting and fostering democracy in the Middle East is highly complex and specific, thereby posing a considerable research challenge. The writer of this thesis has made a successful attempt to deal with these issues.

It should be noted that studies on this topic are only *in statu nascendi* in Poland. So far, only occasional attention has been given in research projects to

the issue of using soft power in international relations.¹ This is reflected in the modest number of publications on the subject.² There is just one publication about Japan using soft power.³ The same applies to studies on the commitment of European institutions to the democratization of CEE⁴ and former USSR states. A single doctoral dissertation on this topic has been written.⁵ US involvement in democratization processes in the Middle East has only been tackled occasionally and marginally (two doctoral dissertations).⁶ The number of

¹ E.g. the research project “Soft power in international relations” (headed by Beata Ociepka, Institute of International Studies, Faculty of Social Science of the University of Wrocław, duration period April 14, 2010-April 13, 2013, reference no. NN116283238). The project aimed at examining the importance of soft power in modern international relations and clarification of the definition of soft power on the example of Poland, cf.: <http://nauka-polska.pl/dhtml/raporty/praceBadawcze?rtype=opis&objectId=285509&lang=pl>.

Another example is the research project “Educational and cultural foreign exchange programs as an instrument of US foreign policy – opinions of US diplomats and non-governmental organizations” (headed by Katarzyna Pisarska, Department of Public Administration, Collegium of Socio-Economics, Warsaw School of Economics, duration period May 30, 2011-November 15, 2011, reference no. 02/BMN/0007/11). The aim of the project was to determine best practice in the field of designing and implementing government-sponsored exchange programs on the example of the United States, perceived from the governmental and non-governmental points of view, cf.: <http://nauka-polska.pl/dhtml/raporty/praceBadawcze?rtype=opis&objectId=258219&lang=pl>.

² *Miękka siła i dyplomacja publiczna Polski*, B. Ociepka (ed.), Warszawa 2013; B. Piskorska, “Hard power kontra soft power: amerykańska a europejska wizja polityki zagranicznej: czy porozumienie jest możliwe?”, in: *Współpraca transatlantycka: aspekty polityczne, ekonomiczne i społeczne*, Warszawa 2014, pp. 85-106.

³ *Japoński soft power: wpływy Japonii na kulturę zachodnią*, A. Wosińska (ed.), Toruń 2010.

⁴ *Rada Europy a przemiany demokratyczne w państwach Europy Środkowej i Wschodniej w latach 1989-2009*, J. Jaskiernia (ed.), Toruń 2010; R. Youngs, K. Oliwia Brudzińska, *The European Endowment for Democracy: will it fly?*, Warsaw 2012.

⁵ Renata Kunert-Milcarz, *Wspieranie demokratyzacji i demokracji w wybranych państwach byłego ZSRR przez podmioty europejskie* (supervisor: Andrzej Jabłoński, Institute of Political Science, Faculty of Social Science of the University of Wrocław, Wrocław, March 4, 2011).

⁶ Grzegorz Nycz, *Pomiędzy perswazją a interwencją. Amerykańska polityka krzewienia demokracji po 1989 roku*, (supervisor: Andrzej Mania, Institute of Political Science and International Relations, Faculty of International Studies of Jagiellonian University, Kraków September 15, 2009). This dissertation discusses the issue of the US perception of liberalization and democratization in the Middle East.

Justyna Zajęc, *Środki i metody oddziaływania USA w bliskowschodnim procesie pokojowym (1991-2000)*, (supervisor: Ryszard Zięba, Faculty of Journalism and Political Science of the University of Warsaw, Warsaw June 16, 2014).

publications that discuss different kinds of diplomacy in the context of soft power and the promotion of democratic values is considerably greater.

It can be said *ad hoc* that the dissertation reviewed herein fills a gap in political science research into international relations.

* * *

The dissertation specifies a clear objective to investigate and assess the US practice of promotion of democracy in three Middle East and North Africa (MENA) states, namely Egypt, Iraq and Jordan. The selection of these states is justified in a convincing manner. They have enjoyed special status in their relations with the US and have had differing influences on US history. MENA has never lost its essential position in US strategic plans, as well as in the promotion and propagation of democracy by the US, although this process has been a unique phenomenon of recent decades.

The author makes the following fundamental research hypothesis: a consistent relation is assumed to exist between the top-bottom approach to the promotion of democracy and the durability of the results obtained. Additionally, he poses three main research questions. The first one addresses the bottom-up approach to the promotion of democracy, and is intended to answer the question of whether such an approach requires intensified efforts in order to achieve permanent results. The second question is as follows: how is a given campaign's status of the promotion of democracy supposed to facilitate the emergence of conditions conducive to democratization. The third question intends to define the extent to which the kind of preceding political system influences the process of the promotion of democracy. Alongside the fundamental hypothesis, the three main research questions are well thought-out.

The author deserves to be praised for his ability to apply terms and categories in the field of international relations and he observes a terminological

regime throughout the entire dissertation. His reference to the term ‘Westoxication/Westoxification,’ which is barely known in Poland, deserves mentioning.

In terms of methodology, the author opts for a traditional approach. Institutional and historical methods are of prime importance here. He justifiably goes for the diachronic perspective with reference to the latter. The comparative method is repeatedly applied as well. Qualitative analysis clearly prevails in the analytical part, as clearly exemplified by the choice of the case study method. Nevertheless, quantitative analysis is sporadically applied when presenting the indicators of soft power: IfG-Monocle Soft Power Index and The Soft Power 30. Concluding, the methodology applied in the dissertation concerned is adequate in order to resolve the research issue (studies comprise verification, description and explanation, evaluation, application and, marginally, forecast).

The timeframe is set to comprise the period from 2003-2013. 2003 marks the beginning of the war in Iraq, or the Second Gulf War. The end of this war brought about a radical change to US concepts of how to promote and propagate democracy, especially in the Middle East and North Africa. Since the end of the war, the US has endeavored to use soft power much more often than during the Cold War, when using force, including military solutions, was quite frequent. The author fails to explain his choice for the end of the timeframe. In the case of Egypt, 2013 may be associated with the coup d’état, in Iraq – with the struggle against the Sunni, and in Jordan with parliamentary elections. In view of the topicality of the issues discussed, the analysis should end in 2015.

The dissertation encompasses a “List of Figures,” “List of Tables,” “Abbreviations,” “Introduction,” five chapters, “Conclusion” and “Bibliography.” Presenting the list of abbreviations used later on is a welcome solution.

The structure of the dissertation is well considered and constitutes a logical whole. Proportions between individual chapters are generally accurate.

The internal structure of succeeding chapters raises no doubts. The internal structure of the last three chapters, especially the second part of each, is quite similar (“Present Tasks, Challenges and Possible Threats”), which is justified by the fact that they discuss the same issues in the context of three case studies.

The content of the dissertation is strictly relevant to its title.

Each chapter is preceded by a synthetic introduction into the issues discussed. Additionally, each chapter ends with a valuable concluding section (“Conclusion”) which is yet another advantage of this dissertation.

The “Introduction” describes each chapter in great detail, in particular chapter two.

The first two chapters introduce the main issues.

Chapter one presents a general characteristic of the approach the US has taken to the topic of the promotion of democracy in the Middle East and North Africa. The US concept of democracy is synthetically presented, taking into account definitions by Abraham Lincoln and Thomas Paine, and outlining US discourse around the concept of democracy in recent decades (when the significance of individual freedom and of global promotion of democratic values has been emphasized).

The Middle East and North Africa as a strategic region for the US (“strategic chessboard”) is skillfully described. It was also necessary to go back to the origins of US support and the promotion of democracy in this region and accurately identify the multidimensional interests of the US there. The discussion of the two prevailing concepts of democracy, top-down and bottom-up, is valuable. Indicating their theoretical and practical dichotomy is also noteworthy.

The most important US entities involved in the propagation and promotion of democracy in the world, and in particular in the Middle East (National Endowment for Democracy, United States Agency for International Development, IFES – Democracy at Large, and Freedom House) are reviewed

synthetically, alongside other organizations and institutions committed to promote democracy in the MENA region. The author aptly notes that NGOs are highly symbiotic to US federal agencies and constitute a significant element of US soft power, aiming at more than only charity and education.

The nature of US aid programs aimed at the states concerned is accurately indicated (Middle East Partnership Initiative, Millennium Challenge Account, Near East Regional Democracy, Foundation for the Future) as well as their significance during successive US administrations (support for political activists fostering democracy, human rights and women's rights organizations, monitoring free and fair elections).

This chapter is concluded with the presentation of different researchers' opinions on the topic of US support for democracy in this region. The accurate identification of the challenges the US faces in this respect is also valuable (subchapter entitled "Critical Voices and Major Challenges").

The content of chapter two fully corresponds to its title and contains an expert and comprehensive definition of soft power in international relations, which is developed not only on the findings of Joseph Nye but of other scholars as well (the attitude to power represented by Norman Fairclough, Robert Dahl, Max Weber, Lillie Chouliaraki and others). It is valuable for the dissertation that it refers to Takeshi Matsuda's idea of soft peace, which emphasizes benevolence and full respect for a defeated enemy. A justifiable reference is also made to the evolution of the concept of power in international relations and the tools of soft power (e.g. public and cultural diplomacy). This part of the dissertation exhibits outstanding theoretical merit. Soft power is the fundamental category of the dissertation.

Two subchapters that follow are of historico-political nature, as they present the origin of US contacts with the Middle East, and in particular US involvement in this region during the Cold War (the events of 1956 and 1958 are stressed here) and after the collapse of the bipolar world (in particular

following September 11, 2001). The final subchapter contains valuable considerations on US attitudes to the challenges in the Middle East in the early 21st century (it is emphasized that the promotion of democracy constitutes an important and permanent goal of US foreign policy and of the National Security Strategy, including combating international terrorism).

Chapter three features an analysis of Egypt as a first case study. The geopolitical and strategic importance of Egypt is unique in the MENA region, also for the US. The author is right to observe that the US has tried to apply a bottom-down concept when promoting democracy in Egypt, and supported authoritarian regimes there (in political, economic and military terms) rather than endeavored to overthrow them. The US preferred a single leader staying in power for the long term, which facilitated stability in Egypt and the whole region. The significance of Egypt for the US meant that promotion of democracy in Egypt was not a priority of US involvement there (US military and economic aid was enormous and further increased by the aid of international organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund, which cancelled half the USD 40 billion of Egyptian debt). Nevertheless, the US-Egypt relations have transformed from a patron-client style to relations of political and military allies, which the author extensively comments upon. Despite this changed nature of US-Egypt relations, he indicates several US initiatives to promote democracy in Egypt.

Studies presented in this chapter are primarily based on an analysis of the presidency of Hosni Mubarak and expanded in the final section of the chapter by the January 2011 uprising and the July 2013 coup d'état. When discussing the problems of the deficit of democracy in Egypt an interesting reference is made to Mexico, when it was trying to access the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The author makes three important statements in the context of the present US commitment to the promotion of democracy in Egypt: the Egyptian army is not an entity that fosters democracy, but it is likely to

remain the main power in the political system in the immediate future; after the collapse of the Hosni Mubarak regime, democratic elections have produced political conflicts, instead of a consensus that might lead to the democratization of the country; Egypt's motivation to cooperate with the US in the field of security is not a result of the enormous financial aid offered by the US but is founded on the national interest.

The analysis in chapter four starts with the determinants of the Second Gulf War. It briefly presents different aspects of the ideological war the US waged in the context of defending democracy and liberty; and justifying its use of hard power in Iraq for this purpose, despite the lack of a UN mandate, which continued even after the war had ended. The US administration named the war against Iraq the Operation Iraqi Freedom. In contrast to what happened in Egypt and Jordan, in order to implement a democratic regime in Iraq, the US opted for military measures rather than soft power (the author refers to numerous opinions of experts in this field). This was the case because Iraq is the most complex and complicated example of the US promoting and fostering democracy in the MENA region.

The author presents a wide range of premises of US policy to foster democracy in Iraq following the collapse of the Saddam Hussein regime, and supports them with theoretical considerations on the political transition from authoritarian to democratic systems. The concepts and activities in this field were declared to lead to the reconstruction, stability and development of Iraq (this mainly concerns the operations of the United States Agency for International Development). Using statistics and politicians' statements, the author draws a detailed picture of US aid for Iraq.

Similarly to the preceding chapters, chapter five pays considerable attention to bilateral relations. It describes US-Jordan relations before and after the First Gulf War and interprets important recent events. US foreign aid for Jordan is skillfully described (this aid was focused on health care, supporting

education and private entrepreneurship on the basis of public-private partnership) and followed by the discussion of issues strictly related to the US fostering democracy in Jordan. The significance of US aid in the military field, security and intelligence is also stressed.

Being a major non-NATO ally of the US and a monarchy, Jordan required a specific attitude in the context of the promotion of democracy by the US, which is presented by the author in detail (e.g. the activities of the National Democratic Institute). As in the preceding two chapters, a comprehensive picture of these activities is skillfully presented here and valuably complemented by the sections on the challenges and threats posed by the developments in Syria and the activities of the so-called Islamic State.

The “Conclusion” is extensive and contains numerous accurate observations. The author demonstrates his synthetic and predictive skills there.

* * *

When assessing the substantive value of individual chapters it should be noted that they are competently written. Importantly, they are not outweighed by description and explanation prevails. Therefore the author’s explanatory skills deserve to be praised.

It should be stressed that the author endeavors to present the content analyzed in the context of theoretical and explanatory achievements of renowned scholars (e.g. Jonathan Clarke – American neo-conservatism; Nils Petter Gleditsch, Lene Siljeholm Christiansen, Håvard Hegre – democratic interventionism; Michael Cox, Doug Stokes – the concept of US exceptionalism; Alan Richards – the theory of the rentier state; Mancur Olson – the theory of collective action; Barbara Conry – the policy of dual containment).

Although it is not an easy task, the author competently presents the complex nature of relations between the US, Egypt, Iraq and Jordan, and

refrains from oversimplification in his discussion. Importantly, and not always accounted for by other scholars, he emphasizes that each state in the region should be considered in its own context, and as a separate entity that does not have a counterpart (with its own history, culture and tradition, political experience including the former political system and other).

Analytical themes that pertain to the assessment of the top-bottom (related to the neo-conservative approach) and bottom-up (related to the neo-liberal approach) concepts of the US's promotion and fostering of democracy on the selected examples are of particular value. The author adequately grasps evolutionary changes to the US concept of the promotion of democracy (e.g. the aspect of the stability of outcomes in the long term and generating conditions fostering the introduction of democracy).

The author has a very good understanding of internal issues and the intricacies of modern international relations, in particular in the relations between the US and states of the Middle East. He expands his research perspective, encompassing geopolitical contexts; he takes into account a wide range of political, economic and social issues, alongside religious and military elements in endo- and exogenous dimensions. For instance, he takes into account the outcomes of the Arab Spring and Arab Winter, and their influence on the process of the promotion and introduction of democracy.

He is right when he notes that introducing democracy is strictly related to economic aspects. The US administration has always insisted that political transformations be accompanied, or even preceded by economic liberalization. The author present statistics that demonstrate that US federal aid for the states of the Middle East is, nevertheless, outweighed by military aid, for instance accounting for USD 4.8 billion in 2011, as compared to USD 1.8 billion of economic aid and USD 21 mln of health care aid (excluding bilateral agreements). Additionally, even in relatively peaceful times (the mid-1990s) the US maintained a considerable military presence in the region, which

demonstrated the implementation of hard instead of soft power in international relations.

The author is aware of the fact that the process of the promotion and support of democracy is highly complex, and it comprises numerous levels and a multitude of factors. There is not one universal prescription or recipe for all the non-democratic states in the world. The author realizes and repeatedly stresses that it is necessary to take account of the specific nature of a given state when designing the concept, methods and tools to promote and foster democracy there. Any generalizations are unjustified. It is impossible to promote democracy in a given state by means of a unidimensional influence.

The author accurately presents the prevailing US attitudes to the democratization in the Middle East and the details of how they are related to individual states. He also formulates general observations on the success of democracy in the Middle East in terms of democratic values, institutional structure and the emergence of civil society.

He aptly indicates the huge discrepancy between the US objectives to democratize Egypt, Iraq and Jordan and the actual outcomes of US policy.

The author endeavors to remain objective in his studies. He presents different opinions and views (of politicians and scholars). He succeeds in his attempts to draw a comprehensive picture of the issue examined.

It is worth noting that in the analysis of the issue the author manages to maintain a desirable cognitive distance, and makes use of opinions of different academics. He does not succumb to extremist opinions, and tries to argue with them.

There are relatively frequent statements that the implementation of democracy in the Middle East has turned out to be counterproductive, while generating high costs for the donor (i.e. the US). There are also more general considerations on whether it is feasible to implement democracy in the Middle East, and if so – how long it is going to take.

* * *

The formal aspect of the dissertation should be highly appreciated, with reference to all the elements. The language is precise and meets academic standards. The author applies academic apparatus conforming to the principles of its use and produces the considerable number of 741 footnotes. The same holds true for the tables and graphs in the dissertation. There are no comments as to the title page, the size of the dissertation, edition, footnotes and citations.

The bibliography is abundant and diverse. It is divided into the following parts: “Books,” “Articles” and “Internet sources.” The monographs and chapters of collective works indicated in the bibliography are mostly up-to-date, and contain valuable US and British academic studies on the general and detailed issues discussed in the dissertation. The bibliography also features the speeches and autobiography of G.W. Bush, as well as studies into the theory of international relations (e.g. by J.S. Nye). It also takes account of reports, lexicons, dictionaries and encyclopedias related to international relations and, in particular, those concerned with the Middle East conflict (e.g. the context of radical Islam and terrorism). The author also makes a justifiable reference to ‘somewhat forgotten’ publications from the 1980s and even the 1960s, which allows him to illustrate the evolution of US policy towards the Middle East in more depth.

This part of the “Bibliography,” as well as the remaining two, actually demonstrates that the author is well-read in the global literature on the topic. Texts published in specialist academic journals prevail among the articles, while internet sources are highly diverse, and encompass state documents and international documents, reports, legal acts, academic texts, press releases and television coverage, as well as the websites of different universities and organizations promoting democracy.

The bibliography should be deemed to constitute an exhaustive review of sources and studies published in English and pertaining to the topic of the dissertation and, therefore, yet another advantage of the dissertation concerned.

This list could have been complemented by two other valuable publications: a monograph by Theresa Reinold⁷ and a collective work edited by Inderjeet Parmar and Michael Cox.⁸

* * *

It is a reviewer's obligation to share some remarks and suggestions regarding the dissertation. Similar to some of the above comments, they are predominantly of minor gravity as concerns the topic discussed.

There is a feeling of a certain dissatisfaction with methodological and theoretical matters and, in particular, with respect to foreign policy paradigms. The author fails to indicate directly which modern paradigm of international relations serves as the basis for his studies (neo-realism, neo-liberalism, constructivism or post-modernism).

While stressing the accurate selection of states for case studies it would be of cognitive interest to expand the scope of studies to include other states in the region, for instance including the small states in the Persian Gulf, such as Kuwait.

The "Introduction" does not address the modern state of studies on the topic of the dissertation. On the other hand, however, the composition of the bibliography demonstrates that the author is knowledgeable about the literature on the topic.

⁷ T. Reinold, *Soft power in foreign policy: the U.S. and the wars against Iraq in 1991 and 2003*, Saarbrücken 2008.

⁸ *Soft power and US foreign policy: theoretical, historical and contemporary perspectives*, I. Parmar, M. Cox (eds), London – New York 2010.

The title of the dissertation could have been more precise; the same goes for the last sections of the titles of chapters two and three (“the Middle East”) as the author tends to use a broader term “the Middle East and North Africa.”

The author accurately indicates the geopolitical significance of the Middle East and North Africa for US interests first and foremost. The only pity is that he fails to enumerate what states he deems to constitute the Middle East and North Africa. Additionally, the author applies a different geopolitical unit, namely the “Broader Middle East and North Africa, BMENA,” again refraining from indicating what countries this region encompasses.

Although the author skillfully draws a picture of US involvement in the Middle East (subchapter “The American Involvement in the Middle East to Contain Soviet Communism”) in practice he does not devote a single section to discuss the USSR’s struggle against the US to win influence in this region

In the interesting presentation of financing the Near East Regional Democracy program, the author limits himself to the period from 2009-2011 while the end of the timeframe indicated in the title falls in 2013 (graph on p. 74). The program continued after 2011. The same remark concerns foreign aid for the Middle East which is presented only for the period from 2008-2011 (table on p. 56). For a change, the data on US aid for Jordan concerns the period from 2011-2015. It would be worthwhile going back to earlier statistics. In conclusion, it can be said the author should have taken account of different sources of statistics in order to present the data for the entire period of the study, namely the period from 2003-2013.

Whereas the research impartiality of the author deserves to be appreciated and stressed, some phrases he uses should be contested. For instance, the phrase “American campaign in Iraq in 2003” is difficult to accept, or calls for comment, as it was a US war, or US attack on Iraq.

The author does not avoid repetition. More than once he returns to the same topics or repeats passages directly, especially in the case of aid programs

to promote democracy in the region concerned. This can be exemplified by the phrases about the special status of the countries examined in the strategy of US diplomacy and the date the Middle East Partnership Initiative was established.

On several occasions the dissertation too frequently refers to a single study only, for instance the work by Jeremy Sharp referred to in footnotes nos. 632-635 and 639-641.

While stressing the high assessment of the formal side of the dissertation once more, a few flaws can be identified after extremely cautious perusal. Several passages lack indentation and there is a single (!) typo, namely "john" instead of "John" (p. 175).

There are a few discrepancies in the "List of Tables" (table 3 is on p. 213 instead of 214 and table 4 is on pp. 259-260 instead of p. 260). There are a few cases of missing indentation (e.g. p. 122) or text justification (e.g. p. 125).

The statistics of the number of casualties in the Iraq-Iran war should be footnoted and their source indicated (p. 44).

For the Polish reader, I would find it advisable to accompany the dissertation with an abstract in Polish.

* * *

The above comments and suggestions are of marginal character. As concerns the subject matter and formal aspect of the dissertation concerned, it conforms to the requirements of a doctoral dissertation. Therefore, I move for it to be accepted.

A. Zulu