Barrios, Harald; Beck, Martin; Boeckh, Andreas; Segbers, Klaus: _Resistance to Globalization. Political Struggle and Cultural Resilience in the Middle East, Russia, and Latin America._ Hamburg: LIT Verlag 2003. ISBN: 3-8258-6749-8; 178 S.

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Globalization is perhaps the most pretentious, self-assumed and jingoistic motto after the fall of the Berlin Wall and probably also after Yalta. As ambivalent a world order as it is, the break point of globalization may not lie in the discussion of its positive or negative effects, but in its very practicability and its diverse local realities: Is globalization susceptible to be as cheerfully embraced by every country and culture as it is exported by neo-liberal apologetic thinking? Is globalization practicable at all without calling for fierce resistance or disidence from those who can not or will not accept it? Is globalization to be accomplished through the very same formula for everyone, without adaptations and local procedures that may change the globalization process so much that it might not work? Is globalization being slowed down or even reversed in different world regions?

The study of Barrios, Beck, Boeckh, and Segbers „Resistance to Globalization“ points out that the globalization process may not be as smoothly on its way as we boldly tend to think. On the contrary, globalization trends and practices are being challenged, blatantly resisted, and greatly modified and adapted to local realities in several regions of the world’s political and economic periphery. In a compact volume, Barrios et al. choose to put many of these phenomena under the microscope, pushing the debate on globalization out of its western (mostly American) pro and contra discussion to set the focus on different resistant worldwide players. If globalization is a game where two teams from neighboring suburbs clash against each other, Resistance to Globalization turns the sight at those resilient kids on the fringes of the playground who still intend to play their own games.

With this position, the authors of „Resistance to Globalization“ introduce a double paradigm shift in the way globalization is most commonly looked at: Firstly, they abandon the general, theoretical frame of most globalization literature in which theoreticians and apologetic merge on both sides of the pro and con divide amidst a nebula of statistics ranging from the local to the global. This does not only provide a sharper focus on local realities, but also acknowledges the nation-state as player in the globalization process, even if only a „negative“ one capable of resisting or slowing globalization. Secondly, the study of the different resistant players does not lead to the kind of empathetic or apologetic gestures that generally centre on tiers-mondisme and post-colonial discourses, allowing the contributors to apply a critical and down-to-earth analysis of the different case studies. The publication „does not represent a normative choice in the sense that globalization pressures ought to be resisted“ (p. 3); quite on the contrary, most contributors slightly take sides with the neo-liberal mindset that mostly charges failed implementation of liberal principles or deficient sets of political practices for resistant attitudes towards globalization.

The portrait gallery of globalization dissidents collected by Barrios et al. does not depart from any detailed theoretical discussion on the phenomenon of globalization, but from empirical studies trying to test the main theoretical approaches on globalization, challenging both „strong“ and „weak“ globalization hypothesis: Though admitting the existence of the globalization phenomenon, the authors of „Resistance to Globalization“ start from the conclusion that „Globalization works quite differently in different regions of the world, showing various patterns of change and adjustment in both directions: adjustment to the requirements of a globalized world and adjustment of the globalization impulses to regional, national, and even sub-national patterns of economics and politics. […] While it is undeniable that the world market increasingly becomes the reference point for national economic policies, it is also undeniable that different world regions deal with this situation in different ways which reflect their distinct traditions and policy patterns“.
Bearing this in mind, the many case studies in „Resistance to Globalization“ set about to „contribute to the empirical research on what globalization means in different world regions“, namely in three of them where globalization is seen as deficiently implemented or seriously challenged: the Middle East, Russia and South America. Because of its focus on the resistant practices and discourses of the aforementioned dissident players Resistance to Globalization offers not only an exceptionally interesting set of case studies that was missing from the Globalization literature.

Within the Middle East, Martin Beck explores the effects of „petrolism“ as a source of resistance to a globalization trend started with the oil revolution of the 1970s and finished in the following decade with the implementation of re-nationalization and socioeconomic systems often coined as „underdevelopment deluxe“. Beck concludes that petrolism in the oil-renter Arabian states has boosted authoritarian state apparatuses whose elites, while not being in favour of transition to market democracies, do take advantage of globalization and limited liberal reforms to stabilize their authoritarian regimes.

In another, rather different view of the Muslim World, Henner Fürtig immerses into the post-Khomeini Islamic Republic of Iran to look at the adaptation of the Islamic revolution principles of 1979 into the post-Soviet globalization era. While Iran still understands itself as leader of the Islamic umma, and the only alternative to an American-dominated world, Fürtig presents what he considers to be a sophisticated key feature of Iranian policies, in which „president and government are responsible for moderation […] whereas the supreme leader and the clerical institutions take care that these ‘official policies’ do not deviate from the basic goals of the Islamic revolution“.

Turning to Egypt, Sonja Hegasy analyzes the double standards in the Arabian discourse on globalization, using the beliefs of Egyptian intellectual Sherif Hetata as an example of Muslim resilience towards Western models and global trends. Hegasy dismisses Heta-ta’s discourse as paradigm of self-styled and highly contradictory argumentation oriented towards self-exclusion from the global village, which effectively points out Hetata’s contradictions and double standards of globalization resisters. However, the author loses balance, as well as understanding of the Arab perspective when she assumes the Middle Eastern resistance to globalization as unjustified, if not as the origin of the region’s problems. Her criticism is particularly one-sided when she states that „opinion leaders should not reproduce the old dichotomy of centre en periphery since this division no longer exists“.

Andrey S. Makaryachev turns our attention to the political spectrum of post-Soviet Russia, in which the new divide between globalists and anti-globalists has replaced the post-1991 divisions between democrats and post-communists. While globalists mainly comprise optimistic neo-liberals, and anti-globalists (nationalist, ex-communists and isolationists among them) on the other hand mostly adhere to the imperial Russian tradition of Realpolitik and balance-of-power, Makaryachev points out the appearance of a compromising, middle-of-the-road position amongst those, who plea for a pragmatic Russian way or even a Russian model of globalization as alternative to the Western model.

Turning to Russia again, Alena V. Ledevna introduces us to the „unwritten rules“ of the quite mazy and opaque Russian politics and economy, judging these rules not merely a hindrance for the implementation of a more successfully globalized economy, but also a major cause for the particular Russian deviation from more transparent and law-abiding Western capitalistic models. In accordance to Ledevna, Andrey Shastik also notices the persistence of highly bureaucratic and subter ranean administrative Russian practices dating back to the Soviet Era. These practices constitute active forms of resistance to globalization; they do contribute to prevent development by raising transaction costs and impeding foreign access to the Russian market.

Of the three world regions under scope, South America gets the least attention, with two diverse models susceptible of widespread exportation being studied: firstly the neopopulism of Vene zuelas president Chavez, and secondly the „predatory federalism“ of regional elites in Brazil. In the first case, Andreas Boeckh sums up the history of Vene-
Venezuelas’ oil boom, and the later decline from the social consensus of 1958 to the failed liberalisation of the late 1980s and 1990s. As the country did not succeed in using its huge oil incomes to overcome its dependencies as a quasi monopolistic renter-state, liberalization did nothing but forcing a break in the former social consensus, leading the country back to former renter-practices in new distribution-oriented populism of president Chávez. While Boeckh acknowledges that „resistance to globalization comes natural in a society in which the oil rent has set the parameters of all economic activities and welfare gains”, the Venezuelan model is not only unsustainable in the long run, but also susceptible of being adopted by other South American countries, for „other countries, too, may slide into the Venezuelan dilemma“.

The Brazilian dilemma looks quite different, as Jörg Faust explains in the last of the volume’s contributions. As many other countries in South America, Brazil tried to implement orthodox liberal reforms in the wake of globalization, particularly during the Collor and Cardoso governments. However, the federalist reform of the 1988 constitution, and the attitudes of political elites made it impossible for the federal governments to restrain sub-national entities from excessive borrowing, allowing regional players to externalize their costs of adjustments to liberalization onto the federal government. Federalism à brasileira developed into a system labelled as „predatory federalism“, putting the nation-state on the brink of financial collapse on several occasions. Faust sees predatory federalism as a result of a compromising democratization process, in which former renter-elites are allowed a too big share of power (at sub-national level, increasing the fragmentation of Brazilian society whilst not offering a sustainable globalization model for the country in the long run.

All contributions in Resistance to globalization are with no doubt valuable sources of analysis and further debate. Especially the focus on different world regions, although, leaving the Asian players aside, represents a highly encouraging material for further study and discussion, susceptible of turning „resistance to globalization“ into an indispensable category of research within globalization studies. At the same time, however, Resistance to globalization leaves the more general questions of the volume in a direct and explicit way unanswered, especially as the book lacks a closing overview or epilogue. This impression deepens when, after examining the individual case studies, a review of the volume’s introduction promises answers to an extensive and ambitious set of questions. Therefore, it is for the reader to make use of the case studies collected in this volume as field research with which to prove the adequacy of more general globalization theories.

For the moment, Barrios, Beck, Boeckh and Segbers show a fierce resistance to sum up, compare and systematise the case studies presented in their volume, but falling short in attempting to answer their initial questions in a direct, structured manner. Perhaps the main point to be extracted from the many case studies in their book is that globalization may have not been fully implemented yet, or even that it may never really happen on a global scale –that is, not without fissures and strong dissidences, comprising countries, whole world regions or even religious entities like the Islamic umma. Possibly, however, a future Hegelian synthesis will occur from which today’s resistance to globalization is a complex, somewhat natural, and probably even enriching antithesis.

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