

The final section of the monographs provides case studies of chosen states in which the Arab Spring has played out. It opens with a chapter by Marta Zobeniak which contains an overview of political situation in Algeria. It is followed by Witold Ostant's text about the circumstances of political transformation in Egypt. Subsequent chapter authored by Piotr Kwiatkiewicz provides interesting analysis of Arab Spring's demographic background with reference to situation in Egypt. Magdalena Lorenc summarizes the course of the Libyan civil war, while Przemysław Osiewicz analyses the complicated situation in Syria. The section concludes with two entries concerning the least known (at least in Poland) cases of upheaval in the Middle East. Jacek Raubo provides detailed overview of situation in Yemen (drawing a comparison with the sad fate of Somalia), while Marta Zobeniak provides overview of situation in Bahrain and its historic roots.

The book under review has several important strengths. First of all, it is an answer to current events, which arouse considerable political, academic and in fact popular interest. Second, it presents a comprehensive approach to the subject. This is reflected in the very structure of the book, taking account of causes and dynamic of the process, its manifestations in different states, as well as reactions of key outside actors. Research benefits from the interdisciplinary nature of the research team. Core political science and international relations analyses is accompanied by the economics, media analyses and social psychology perspectives. It undeniably enriches the understanding of the processes in question. Thirdly, the book can be a useful compendium on the key aspects of the Arab Spring. The authors have taken account of the great majority of key aspects and cases of the analysed process. It can also be argued that this work suffers from two drawbacks. Although the book offers a comprehensive view of the Arab Spring it is not fully complete. The section concerning the causes and dynamics of the Arab Spring could arguably benefit from a deeper analysis of Arab states' political systems, which (diverse as they are) share some common features important for the understanding of political discontent. In the section concerning reactions of key outside players Turkey's omission is visible. This state has undoubtedly played an important role in the events of 2011 (for example as a "role model" for Muslim democracy or in the case of Syria). At the same time Switzerland has been included, while this state can hardly be classified as a "key" player in the region. Finally, some chapters are regarded as offering more of a recollection of key events than their in-depth background and analysis. However, in general "The Arab Spring" is a useful source of knowledge and reflection on one of the key issues in contemporary international relations. It can serve as a starting point for further studies of this subject.

Rafał WIŚNIEWSKI

Poznań

J. Michalak, *International Security Threats in the Biological Realm*, Scientific Publishers Press Ltd, Łódź 2005, pp. 128.

According to a traditional definition, security is freedom from threats posing a risk to the survival of the state. The broad definition of security threats in turn includes any action or sequence of events that threaten citizens' quality of life in a short period of time or restrict the scope for political choices made by the institutions of the state. Therefore, among others,

it is important to protect political order and the freedom to choose the path of development of society and the state¹. Each state considers the desire to safeguard its security and sovereignty to be the highest good. Until recently, the factor influencing the development of security has been above all military force. Today, recourse to military power cannot go unpunished, because even states with the latest weapons technology cannot use it freely without considering its consequences, which is the risk of retaliation. A number of various factors, in addition to the military factor, should be taken into account: economic, technological, financial, ecological, or modern means of information.² States taking into account these factors shape their security policies, understood as part of the overall government policy regarding projects related to the creation and use of defence capabilities in order to prevent and combat all kinds of threats.³ The condition of any state's security is subject to change proportional to change in the international environment.⁴ The condition and the total security of any and all countries-members of the international community-create the basis for international security. Its foundation is a set of conditions, standards, principles, codes of conduct, and international mechanisms to ensure more or less a sense of unthreatened existence, survival, and freedom of the development of states.⁵

J. Michalak's monograph presents a factor whose impact on international security continues to grow: biological one. The major part of the work includes: an introduction, three chapters, and a conclusion.

Chapter one, *Great Epidemics in Human History*, is devoted to four chosen epidemics that affected (and affect) man: plague, smallpox, malaria, and influenza. This is not only a terse description of the diseases, but also consideration of their impact on international security. As Michalak rightly argues, because of their frequency of occurrence and serious demographic, social, and cultural effects, the international community must be prepared for the diseases, considered in public opinion to be "under control", to be dangerous again.

Part two, *Hazards of the Modern World*, deals mainly with two problems: HIV/AIDS and biological warfare. The author presents data on the development of HIV/AIDS in various regions of the world and repeats (though for some, it is still a novelty) what the most effective ways to combat the epidemic are: the development and strengthening of programmes, policies, and strategies to prevent new infections in all countries (p. 57). No. 1 threat of the modern world seems to be international terrorism, which reaches for newer and newer instruments. One of them may as well be a biological weapon, especially that it is relatively cheap and extremely effective (p. 60).

In the last chapter, *Improved Nature-a Hope or a Threat*, the author tries to consider what consequences genetic engineering (including modification of plants and animals as well as human cloning and "improvement") may have. From a methodological point of

¹ See: J. Czaputowicz, *System czy nieład? Bezpieczeństwo europejskie u progu XXI wieku*, Warszawa 1998, p. 17.

² Cz. Mojsiewicz, *Czynniki wpływające na poczucie bezpieczeństwa i suwerenności państw*, in: *Międzynarodowe stosunki polityczne*, (eds.) W. Malendowski, Cz. Mojsiewicz, Poznań 1996, p. 37.

³ *Słownik terminów z zakresu bezpieczeństwa narodowego*, Akademia Obrony Narodowej, Warszawa 1996, p. 71.

⁴ W. Malendowski, *Polityka bezpieczeństwa RP. Uwarunkowania – strategia – kierunki działania*, Poznań 1998, p. 75.

view, she does so in a completely correct way, citing various, often controversial, opinions in very intense and often simply emotional debate over eugenics.

The monograph's appendices include: a thorough and well-structured *Bibliography* (though it seems that it might have been more appropriate to divide *Magazines* into *Scientific Journals* and *Opinion Journalism*), three appendices (*Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights of 1997*, *Timeline of Cloning History*, and *Voices of Society*) and an outline in English, *Summary*. Particularly noteworthy is Appendix 3 (p. 126), where, despite its very condensed nature, Michalak, having presented views on genetic engineering, makes an objective and balanced choice.

The only shortcoming of the work—from a technical point of view—is an inconsistency in the footnotes: when including words from a book for the second time, the author uses “*ibid.*” on some occasions and “*op. cit.*” on others, which is incomprehensible (see p. 27).

The work was written based on the available literature on the subject by outstanding Polish and foreign authors (p. 8). Such a statement may raise the question of who these outstanding authors are and who just authors.

Michalak says in *Conclusion* that the history of mankind is in some sense a history of epidemics and the fight against viruses, bacteria, and diseases caused by them (p. 107). Examples in support of this thesis are given even by events in recent years—bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), foot-and-mouth disease, or avian influenza are not only diseases that can become individual tragedies but also phenomena that can affect the relative economic and political stability of the current international system.

The publication under review definitely deserves a positive assessment and should be propagated among researchers on the phenomenon of international security, in particular biological threats. It would also be sensible to hope that the author will explore the issues addressed in the book (such as the benefits and risks of scientific and technical progress in the field of genetic engineering) in her further research.

Łukasz DONAJ

Poznań