

Jiří Skoupý

M.A. Thesis Evaluation

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*Republican Foreign Policy and the War on Terror*

Jiří (Jirka) Skoupý has produced a wonderful M.A. dissertation on a very important topic. The war on terror declared by President George W. Bush after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 has remained the defining issue of American foreign policy ever since. Jirka has meticulously analyzed the subject and his referencing throughout the work testifies to this fact. Not only has he consulted numerous secondary sources, but he has also demonstrated his mastery of online primary sources. This deserves praise.

The work itself is divided into an introduction (Chapter 1), six main chapters (Chapters 2-7), and a conclusion (Chapter 8). Each chapter is neatly divided into sections. This is helpful to the reader who is better able to orient himself/herself. A summary and some appendices are located at the end of the thesis.

In the introduction (Chapter 1), Jirka presents his main research questions and his attempts to answer them. He also evaluates the sources he has consulted. Overall, the introduction is well-written and is informative.

Chapter 2 discusses the first phase of the war on terror. Obviously, the attacks of 11 September transformed the George W. Bush administration's priorities. Jirka makes a point of scrutinizing the 2002 National Security Strategy and his arguments are logical. He then delves into the issue of how neoconservatives came to dominate the conservative foreign policy debate at the beginning of the millennium. I think Jirka is on the mark when he claims that the attacks of 11 September opened the door to the implementation of more radical ideas in foreign policy. This chapter is informative and of very high quality.

Chapter 3 addresses the whole issue of the second Iraq War of 2003. The war definitely did not proceed according to the expectations of Bush administration hawks. Jirka discusses how the war was received at home and abroad and he also scrutinizes the reactions of various foreign policy scholars.

In Chapter 4, Jirka presents the ongoing Iraq conflict within the framework of the 2004 election, in which President Bush stood against Democratic Senator John Kerry. Basically, the conservatives made an issue of not changing presidents in the middle of a war and their message ultimately won the acceptance of the electorate, who reelected Bush. Jirka is indeed correct in his observation that the neoconservatives were encouraged by Bush's reelection.

Chapter 5 discusses Iraq during Bush's second term. The situation was far from rosy. In the first place, the war did not progress as neoconservatives had thought it would and criticism began to mount. Instead of becoming a country in which democratic conditions were developing, Iraq was getting more unstable and new problems seemed to crop up all the time. This chapter logically flows into the next one.

Chapter 6 analyzes the changes in the political atmosphere in 2006, which culminated in the Republicans losing control over both houses of Congress in the mid-term congressional elections. In 2007, Bush received support for sending an additional 20,000 troops to Iraq, which was a recognition of the failure of Donald Rumsfeld's initial policies. Jirka has done a fine job here and deserves to be commended.

In Chapter 7, Jirka outlines the factors that determined the outcome of the conservative foreign policy debate. The president's management style, the constructed narrative, and the overall conservative foreign policy debate contributed to Bush's foreign policy, which was finally rejected by the electorate in 2006. After the mid-term elections of 2006, Bush had to reformulate policies, which had not only failed in reality, but were seen as misguided by the voters.

Jirka's conclusion (Chapter 8) recapitulates his main ideas on the outcome of the conservative foreign policy debate. Again, Bush's management style, the war on terror narrative, and the Republican use of foreign policy in their electoral strategy all played a role.

I am very pleased with this dissertation. Jirka has demonstrated his superb knowledge of the issues at hand. It is also heartening that he remembered any influence I might have had on his interest in American studies in spite of the fact that we both respectfully disagree on certain issues. I recommend an **excellent** mark along with a **dean's commendation**.

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