

Gerhard Seibert, Paulo Fagundes Visentini (eds.): Brazil-Africa Relations: Historical Dimensions and Contemporary Engagements, From the 1960s to the Present. Suffolk, Rochester: James Currey/Boydell & Brewer 2019, 279 Pages, 21 Euros.

Chronicling six decades of relations between a state actor on one side and a continent on the other is no easy feat, especially in the form of an edited volume of diverse disciplinary backgrounds. Editors Seibert and Visentini step up to the plate in the aptly named *Brazil-Africa Relations: Historical Dimensions and Contemporary Engagements, From the 1960s to the Present*. Amid the different levels of criticism and depths of analysis in its seven chapters (two of the four scholars, Visentini and Pereira, co-coordinate a Brazilian geopolitical think-tank while the other two are primarily social scientists), the book holds an impressive breadth of knowledge. It could have worked well as a handbook, which is what Visentini's Chapter 3 (*The Multilateral and Regional Dimensions of Current Brazil-Africa Relations*) and Pereira's Chapter 5 (*The South Atlantic in the Framework of Brazil-Africa Relations*) read like. Taking

this route while further revising the book – necessary also for some of its grammar, paragraph lengths, transitions, and referencing – could have solved the issue of certain definitions and statistics being needlessly repeated, as well as apparent contradictions between authors' opinions on certain topics.

Approaches may have been better fitted to balance each other out if more of the book had been like Chapter 7 (*Brazil-Africa Relations After Lula: Continuity Without Priority*), since this was written by two authors rather than just one. Here Seibert's more critical and integrative stance towards Brazil's domestic and foreign affairs, past and present, complements Visentini's well-developed sense of Brazil's impetus as a political and economic actor and of the image it seeks to project beyond its mounting domestic debris. Moreover, a bit of chapter rearrangement could have improved the book's flow from the domestic to the international realm, or vice-versa.

Collected in bits and pieces in a book lacking an overall guiding thesis, Brazil appears as the troubled, vacillating but often well-meaning protagonist, illustrated via some key political and intellectual leaders, group member-

ships, flashes of brilliant potential, and embarrassing gaps between rhetoric and practice. The reader may infer from the volume that Brazil's pragmatism and affability as an international actor have been crucial to preserving bilateral and multilateral relations through its boom-and-bust cycles which, coupled with bouts of global capitalist unrest, have made it hard for Brazil to follow through on ambitious trade and development deals.

Africa serves at the same time as supporting actor and field of action in the book, mostly defined through its relationships with Brazil and with the South American state's 'emerging' counterparts. South Africa is the only African state addressed as an equal to Brazil's 'new regionalist' power aspirations, sharing membership and goals in groupings of doubtful sustainability such as the BRICS (plus Russia, India and China) and IBSA (minus Russia and China). Besides South Africa, a few African states and their leaders are mentioned as more focal points of interactions, like members of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP). Little is said, however, about Gilberto Freyre's seminal lusotropicalism: a discourse rooted in Portuguese colonialism and so

ingrained in the lusophone space, and even in Brazil-Africa relations in general, that leading politicians and scholars still spread it as common sense.

The book does not say much, either, about the proverbial elephant in the room, President Jair Bolsonaro, whose election in 2018 on a populist far-right platform shot down Brazil's well-crafted international image as a tolerant 'rainbow nation'. Brazilian diplomats pitched such an image to African states and other potential trade and bandwagoning partners for decades, even during Brazil's military dictatorship (1964–85). Every chapter should have been updated to somehow reflect the outcome of the presidential elections, which has since proven catastrophic for a fragile, divided society currently handling a pandemic and endemic misinformation, as shadowy networks of corruption and violence continue to spread their tentacles.

Updating it and drawing a stronger link between domestic and foreign affairs would have made Quintão's standout Chapter 6 (*Africa in Brazil: Slavery, Integration, Exclusion*) more effective in explaining why it is problematic for a nation capable of electing

Bolsonaro and of largely keeping Black people out of universities, politics and diplomacy to label itself a 'racial democracy', exceptionally suited to lead development in Africa. What sets Quintão's chapter apart from other texts on Brazil-Africa relations is its call for self-reflexivity among scholars and a statistics-supported exposition of intersectional exclusion in Brazil, a country composed of starkly different levels of socioeconomic access and development, crippled by inequality among races, genders and classes, and by its self-hatred. The editors should be commended for including this dimension, so setting an important precedent in the field.

ANA BEATRIZ RIBEIRO

Ana Beatriz Ribeiro: Modernization Dreams, Lusotropical Promises: A Global Studies Perspective on Brazil-Mozambique Development Dynamics. Africa-Europe Group for Interdisciplinary Studies 23. Leiden: Brill 2020, 340 pages, 70,00 Euro.

In this book, Ana Beatriz Ribeiro provides an important contribution to history, international relations, and contemporary analysis of South-South development initiatives. The text engages carefully with Brazil's role as an 'emerging' power in the early 21st century. By framing her study in what might be considered a 'founding myth' of lusotropicalism, Ribeiro highlights the extent to which the notion of lusotropicalism has been consistently bent to meet the needs of actors from across the political spectrum.

Lusotropicalism is a sociological theory developed by Gilberto Freyre in the early 20th century that claimed Brazil was somehow less racist than other countries due to the 'mixtures' enabled by its climate. The broad work of this book is to show how various political regimes in Brazil have drawn upon the idea of lusotropicalism