

Book Review

– *Brazil's Emerging role in Global Governance: Health, Food Security and Bioenergy*, by Markus Fraundorfer . Palgrave & Macmillan, 2016.

The book relates to literature on international relations and the role of emerging powers in global governance. It is about the rising power of Brazil in the 21st century in three sectors of global governance: access to medicines, food security and bioenergy. Following a brief introduction, where the author presents the research puzzle and arguments, a theoretical chapter describes the main concepts and the analytical framework that guides the structure of the next three chapters. These are the core of the book, each dedicated to one of the sectors of global governance: health, food safety and bioenergy. After rich descriptions and analyses, the conclusion summarizes the findings, presents a (short but very good) comparison of the three cases, and assesses future agendas for research.

The main argument of the book is that Brazil has been able to expand its international power in the sectors of global governance in which the country acquired some expertise through its own national policies and that represent developmental challenges. The author elaborates that this is not an automatic transfer of one national solution to the global arena but depends instead on the engagement of various dimensions of power, discursive, bargaining/ institutional and resources as well as on the employment of strategies to strengthen and expand institutions and networks in each sector. The book further argues that the exercise of power takes place in interaction with other state and non-state actors.

In my opinion, the book presents a detailed account of global institutions, national policies and the strategies of Brazil to influence global governance in topics that represent important global challenges. The book offers a contribution to the literature on global governance in the issue areas of health, food safety and bioenergy in general, and about Brazil's foreign relations in these particular sectors. It goes beyond the black-box of the state and offers a detailed analysis of a variation of Brazilian state agencies and ministries as well as of individuals that had an active role in shaping Brazilian foreign relations in the issues analysed. Furthermore, the author takes into account the interactions with non-state actors including civil society organizations and the private sec-

tor. The author develops a clear and coherent analytical framework, which is consistently applied in each sector analysed, offering thus an overall well structured book, which is reader friendly.

Among its main flaws, the book does not situate each of these issue areas within a broader picture of global governance, formed by a myriad of regimes such as the multilateral trade regime, environmental agreements, human rights treaties, institutions and agreements on security, thus failing to provide an assessment of the relative importance of each sector within global affairs. For instance, the book does not address the question of the asymmetries between different international regimes, ignoring a number of important debates within international relations scholarship and amongst international law scholars. This is particularly relevant when taking into account that global strategies for achieving food security or access to medicines are limited by the multilateral agreements on trade. The choice for network analysis without previously considering hierarchical structures – and thus the lack of analytical distinction between new patterns of relations and the reproduction of old structures – might explain why the book leaves an impression of an exaggerated optimism. This can be seen, for example, in the following passage: “In this ever-changing, sectoral and multi-actor environment, emerging powers like Brazil, as the new kids on the block, are presented with new and unprecedented opportunities to exercise power in the structures of global governance” (p. 139). The lack of critical assessment about the power inequalities and the rigidness of the structures of global governance gives room instead to projections about the not-yet realized potential of a number of institutions and programmes that have been created by Brazil in these sectors.

The book would have benefited from more research into secondary literature, and by relating the findings to previous scholarly work. For instance, the work from Verena Schüren (2013), and Eimer, Lütz and Schüren (2016) comparing pharmaceutical and innovation systems and patent law in Brazil and India would have been a good reference, among others. This would explain some of the gaps in the analysis: one cannot speak of Brazilian leadership in access to medicine without taking into account the role of the Brazilian Health Surveillance Agency (ANVISA), which implemented a system of prior consent to patents. Not only has it been systematically challenged by pharmaceuticals and other states, but it also served as a model of good practices to other developing countries. Concerning primary data, the choice of interview partners could have included non-Brazilians, inquiring into how others who have interacted with Brazil in these sectors have perceived the rising power of the country. This would better reflect the concept of power in concert, chosen by the author.

As recently unfolding events have radically changed the governmental priorities in Brazil, it would be interesting to examine how the end of the Workers Party government will affect the country’s foreign policy in general and in

these three areas in particular. This could be a good opportunity to expand on the research conducted for this book.

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References

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