

Book Review

– *Brazil and climate change beyond the Amazon*, by Eduardo Viola and Matías Franchini. Routledge, 2018.

Eduardo Viola and Matías Franchini, two accomplished specialists in international relations who have published extensively on climate change politics and governance, debunk the “myth of Brazilian climate leadership in international climate politics” (p. xxii). They argue that Brazil’s poor leadership is the result of the “low quality of Brazilian democracy” (p. xxi). The alleged irrationality of Amazon deforestation, and the state’s feigned inability to control it, are seen as major drivers of Brazil’s weak climate commitment. Their book is informative and innovative in that it takes readers outside climate change negotiations and into the ways in which Brazil’s political economy influences climate change policies. This adds important analytical depth to earlier work on the topic, such as *A Fragmented Continent: Latin America and the Global Politics of Climate Change* by Guy Edwards and J. Timmons Roberts (The MIT Press, 2015).

Chapter 1 presents the international context of climate change negotiations, especially the 2015 Paris Agreement, which would serve as a useful primer for readers new to the topic. The authors develop their climate commitment approach (CCA) framework, which focuses on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, “policy profile” (defined as domestic and foreign “political measures” taken to deal with GHG emissions) and varied drivers of climate commitment (p. xix). This view is based on an assumption of the state as “plural” engaging in actions that result from “a complex social process that involves forces from civil society, the market, and the government” (p. 30).

Chapter 2 situates Brazil in the international context, aiming to dispel the myth that Brazil combated climate change. In applying the CCA framework, the authors argue that the apparent decline in Brazil’s GHG emissions resulted from control of “unrestrained deforestation,” which they describe as a “nineteenth-century problem” (p. 44). Viola and Franchini describe three types of “disorders,” which they defined as “conservative behaviors...in the mindset of the Brazilian elites,” toward the Amazon (p. 48). The notion of Amazon Paranoia is used to describe the elites’ fear of foreign takeover of the Amazon;

Amazon Impotence refers to the elites' inability to exert control of the Amazon; and Amazon Neglect refers to the elites' unwillingness to exert control over the Amazon. This chapter also provides a synthesis of Brazil's recent corruption scandals.

Chapters 3 through 5 focus on periods defined by Brazil's climate commitments. In the 1990 to 2004 period, a "giant irrational deforestation" of the Amazon defined as deforestation without any kind of contribution to economic growth (p. 79) and thus a major source of GHG emissions, was combined with certain elite "disorders" concerning the governance of Amazonia and with a strain of nationalism that permeated the diplomatic bureaucracy, all of which support the view that Brazil was a "climate villain" (p.78) in international climate negotiations. Chapter 4 analyzes the 2005-2010 period, when effective deforestation control policies were reconstructed as climate change policies and when agribusiness responded positively to these policies. Some degree of "climate activism" (p. 123) emerged. During this period, however, the number of vehicles in Brazil increased by 30 per cent to 37 million in 2011 and Petrobras, the state-owned oil company, was strengthened. Chapter 5 covers the most recent period, from 2011 to 2016, when Brazil "regressed" through increasing deforestation and fossil fuel use. Petrobras comes in for additional criticism—it is the source of illegal political contributions that led to a massive political crisis—compounded by the reversion to "Amazon Neglect" disorder (p. 140) and increasing influence of nationalism in climate policy.

Chapter 6 summarizes the book's arguments and offers a proposal for true climate leadership from Brazil, which necessarily includes improvements in Brazilian democracy that would require, in turn, major reforms to the educational and political systems. The authors make the prescient argument that a "populist, neo-nationalist" regime would reduce Brazil's climate commitment (p. 202). The book was published before Jair Bolsonaro was elected president in October 2018; soon after his election, Bolsonaro announced that Brazil would abandon plans to host the 2019 UN climate summit. His foreign minister, Ernesto Araújo, has called global warming a plot to improve China's economic fortunes while stifling the economies of capitalist democracies.

Brazil and Climate Change is a highly relevant and welcome addition to knowledge on Latin American climate change politics, adding considerably to work such as Edwards and Roberts's *Fragmented Continent* through its periodization and analysis of the three major moments of Brazil's climate change politics. However, the book relies on debatable characterizations of Amazonian deforestation as irrational or an anachronistic nineteenth-century phenomenon, which do not recognize "modern" and logical reasons for deforestation. Two other areas of the book merit critical discussion. The nationalism present in Brazil's foreign ministry, Itamaraty, is referred to several times in the book, but a deeper analysis of the strains of nationalism,

bureaucratic groups, ideological influences, and other aspects that produce and sustain nationalism might be topics for future research. Finally, the alleged importance of the quality of democracy for true climate leadership is an interesting claim, but one wonders whether more (perhaps all?) of Brazil's major policy debates could be reduced to the question of the quality of the country's democracy. From this view, it is unclear how much analytical value we can place in the "low quality" democracy (p. 195) interpretation of Brazil's poor climate leadership. In a broader sense, climate change policies seem rather simple in comparison to complex and polemic reforms—to the judiciary, political parties, health care, the retirement system, to name a few—that an improved Brazilian democracy might successfully resolve.

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