

BOOK REVIEW

“POLÍTICA EXTERNA NA ÁFRICA AUSTRAL: GUERRA, CONSTRUÇÃO DO ESTADO E ORDEM REGIONAL”by Igor Castellano da Silva¹Camila Santos Andrade²

It's noticeable, in recent years, that there was an increase in Brazilian academic interest for Africa, stimulated, largely, by the strengthening of the political and economic relations between Brazil and the African continent in the governments of the beginning of 21st century. The papers that were born into this movement seek to describe, to understand and, beyond that, to avoid African stereotypes, as poverty, hunger and conflict. In this sense, the book *Política Externa na África Austral* approaches a subject of strategic, economic and political relevance, presenting African states as agents of their own regional interactions.

Aiming to analyze Southern Africa foreign policy role from the patterns of cooperation and conflict in Southern Africa, the author utilizes a systemic perspective (including international, regional and domestic factors) to understand the reality which took place between the years of 1975 and 2015. In order to understand this goal, the book is divided in three parts. The first part, which covers chapters 1, 2 and 3, presents a theoretical discussion that leads to the subject of analysis. Aspects as the New Regionalism, Foreign Policy Analysis, the debate among the International Relation theories and the structure of the unities are remarkable points of the discussion. In addition,

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the structure itself of the unities, which have particular interests that drive their actions in the system, is analyzed by Silva through the power transition theory, presenting factors to exemplify the agency beyond power distribution, as the systemic order and the evaluation of relevant actors perception.

Fulfilling the theoretical framework, the author utilizes Historical Sociology to comprehend the continuities and changes in the Southern African Regional System. It is important to stress the methodological resources utilized in the present section to, subsequently, build a theoretical and analytical background in the further chapters, either in analytical categories (international and systemic elements), or theories correlation that presents pertinent theoretical elements to the analysis of Southern Africa region, as state building (approaching theoretical resources as State capabilities and the relation between State and Society) and foreign policy analysis (investigating its origins and execution, particularly the role played by the elites in the definition of foreign policy).

The second part of the book, which covers chapters 4, 5 and 6, focuses on the dynamics of cooperation and conflict in Southern Africa. Utilizing the historical perspective mentioned above, it is possible to observe that the construction process of the South-African state was developed in parallel to the region's construction process, generating the reflex of its internal structure in the regional order. Besides that, one notices the massive presence of extra regional powers in Southern Africa between 1975 and 2015, which illustrates the international system dynamics impact on regional scenario.

The third part of the book is constituted by case studies of South Africa, Angola, Mozambique, Namibia and Zimbabwe, countries selected for being regarded as relevant regional agents for the analysis, being possible to see how the author connects the theoretical resources from the first part of the book (from the analytical categories presented in the first part of the book) with the African reality (from the case studies), evidencing the construction challenge those States with weak/unstructured state capabilities, fruit of colonial period, faced. Furthermore, in this section, the cited countries' historical intersections are more noticeable, that is, as the internal unfolding affects the regional dynamics and vice versa, influencing African elites' decision making.

In this context, South Africa stands out as a key country to understand the notion of state-building in Southern Africa. From the analysis of transformations in patterns of conflict and cooperation, it is possible to understand the connection between South Africa's state-building and the reflection of its domestic process in regional dynamics. In addition, it is

noticed how the countries in the region orbit around South African interests, because of its economic (industrial and mining activities developments), infrastructural and geostrategic primacy, evidencing its regional power role.

Angola, on its turn, rises as the second regional power, with an oscillating participation in the region because of internal conflicts between the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA³) and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA⁴), central groups in domestic politics. Attracted by strategic interests, the domestic conflict in Angola was influenced by South African and Cuban presences (intermediate powers), in addition to United States, Soviet Union and China (global powers). One point to remark is the Angolan foreign policy for the region, supporting the independence of Namibia (which would prevent external interferences in its borders) and interacting with the African National Congress (ANC) to affect UNITA.

Therefore, since the independence of Namibia corresponded to the interests of Angola and South Africa, the country became an independent territory in 1990, with a political project based in internal stability and external integrity. With the fragility of an independent country, the Namibian state resembles regionally the countries which rely on South Africa influence (economically and commercially), with strategic sites such as the Walvis Bay port.

Causing concerns to South African policies to the region (in an attempt to maintain the order to its favor), Zimbabwe plays the role of a revisionist country. From strategic interests, this state has in its history the struggle against colonialism and the support to its neighbors in internal matters, such as the unfolding of the conflicts in Mozambique and the support to ANC in South Africa. With Mugabe's ascension to power, Zimbabwe became a bigger challenge to South Africa, either as a contention attempt of a multiracial society, or the proximity of a socialist regime in its borders.

Mozambique, directly influenced by South Africa's internal dynamics and by the support of the Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO⁵) (opposition to the group in power, Mozambique Liberation Front – FRELIMO⁶), faced a number of processes to restore its state capabilities. Through this process, the Mozambican decision-making focus was in the resolution of the internal conflict and in a bigger independence in relation to South-African interests, thus diversifying its partnerships.

3 Portuguese acronym, *Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola*.

4 Portuguese acronym, *União Nacional para Independência Total de Angola*.

5 Portuguese acronym, *Resistência Nacional Moçambicana*.

6 Portuguese acronym, *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique*.

The differential of this book is that, in addition to the flawless theoretical discussion in the first part of the work, the author worked with primary and secondary sources, utilizing field research in the African continent, which has furthermore enriched the research. In addition, this kind of study stimulates and becomes a theoretical tool to the study of other African regions, besides pluralizing papers about the Global South, frequently marginalized in the mainstream analysis of International Relations.

The thematic choice to study Southern Africa foreign policy fills the systemic gap of studies of African countries, particularly about this region, and of the very documentation/description of the evolution of the relation between the countries selected by the author to write his research. There are books which discuss separated case studies about some of the cited countries, but *Política Externa na África Austral* deals with a wider range of actors, analytical categories and historical elements in order to understand one of the most dynamic regions in matters of cooperation, conflict, politics, economy and society.

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