

Joseph Smith, *Brazil and the United States: Convergence and Divergence* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2010), pp. ix + 243, \$24.95, pb.

The 200-year history of relations between Brazil and the United States is remarkable because, despite various fits of suspicion and tension, they have never fought a war against each other, and have often thought of themselves as allies. Though they have been long-time trading partners, aside from diplomats and a few scholars, their peoples have had rather vague notions of each other. Recent Brazilian immigrant communities and tourist visits have done little to raise the level of sophistication of Brazilians regarding the United States, and US citizens are lost beyond Rio and São Paulo. They know next to nothing of Brazilian history, geography, or politics.

Often the two nations' political leaders seem to talk past, rather than to, each other. Oddly and contradictorily, the diplomatic archives of the two countries are full of well-crafted reports and analyses that provide historians with the means to write cogent studies of this or that period. Joseph Smith is well aware of the incongruous aspects of the relationship and provides a flowing, if uneven, account of it that summarises the literature, with emphasis on works in English. He provides a bonus in his frequent comments about British influence on Brazilian–American relations.

In the colonial era, the Portuguese had been so secretive and protective of Brazil that they closed its ports to foreign ships from 1591 to 1808, so it is not remarkable that Brazil was not well known in the United States when the two began relations. Jefferson welcomed the Portuguese royals fleeing Napoleon's troops to the Americas (1808) and instructed his representative to find out all he could about Brazil. Throughout the nineteenth century relations tended to grow warmer, if physically distant, until 1876, when Emperor Pedro II, the first ruling monarch ever to visit, spent three months racing about the United States. He incited feverish public interest and, together with President Grant, opened the Centennial Exposition. Smith seems to downplay the importance of the visit by saying that it 'lacked political motivation' (p. 31), but Secretary of State Hamilton Fish considered that it warranted his personal welcome aboard the emperor's ship as it steamed into New York harbour. There may not have been a clear political agenda, but it was certainly a political event full of symbolism for Americans and Brazilians.

Being an outsider to both countries gives Smith useful emotional distance from his subject. At times, however, he may be a bit too distant. In discussing the mid-nineteenth-century wrangle over the 'opening' of the Amazon basin to foreign shipping, he ascribes the Brazilian refusal to do so to the 'offensive language' of Amazon booster Matthew F. Maury (p. 26) rather than the more reasonable explanation that the imperial government had no effective control of the region beyond Belém do Pará; it simply could not let foreigners travel the basin's waterways freely. Fear of losing the Amazon to grasping foreigners has been a constant among Brazilian worries.

In discussing the overthrow of the empire (1889), Smith asserts that the action began the military's role as 'national arbiter'. I would argue that such a role came much later in the next century. Smith devotes nearly six pages to the naval rebellion of 1893, but ignores the careful reconstruction and analysis of Steven Topik's *Trade and Gunboats: The United States and Brazil in the Age of Empire* (Stanford University Press, 2000). Why does he open a discussion of a key chapter on Brazilian–American 'approximation' with a comment that fewer Americans than Italians were immigrating to Brazil? The United States was receiving millions of immigrants, not exporting them, at the beginning of the twentieth century. Smith's discussion of the Rio Branco

era is well done, but because the enmity with Argentina pushed Brazil closer to the United States, he would have done better to explain the reasons for the animosity. He does mention the personal antipathy between Rio Branco and his Argentine counterpart, Zeballos, but it would have been helpful to the reader to link their conflict to the boundary dispute arbitrated by President Glover Cleveland in Brazil's favour in 1895. Discussing the so-called Dollar Diplomacy years, Smith apparently believes the Brazilian assertion that European governments did not seek 'special favors in awarding of armaments contracts' (p. 66). Yet my research and that of Manuel Domingos Neto shows how English, German and French companies bribed Brazilian officers to influence their decisions. And Smith has the era of Rio Branco approximation 'withering' in the Wilson presidency (p. 69), when it really continued as a principle of Brazil's foreign policy tradition through the 1940s, and sporadically thereafter.

Smith seems intent on avoiding reference to the pioneering research of Bradford Burns, whose *The Unwritten Alliance* (Columbia University Press, 1966) set the standard for quality writing on Brazilian–American relations. He cites this work only to obtain two quotations from Rio Branco and Nabuco. This raises the question of sources. The notes are peppered with citations to appropriate archives in both countries, but make few references to the many excellent publications impressively discussed in the bibliographic essay. This is especially the case regarding the work of Brazilian historians, with the notable exception of the writings of Luiz Alberto Moniz Bandeira. The many fine Brazilian PhD dissertations are totally missing. The bibliographic essay is, however, a first-rate guide to the literature, but it does not reflect the book's content or, presumably, the research upon which it is based.

There are some mistakes. Smith is correct that Germany invited Brazilian generals to attend its army's manoeuvres (1939), but neglects to say that they did not go (p. 110). Vargas did not 'issue a declaration of war' (p. 120) in August 1944; rather, the cabinet voted, because of the Axis submarine attacks, to recognise that *a state of war existed* with Germany and Italy. Brazil prided itself on never having declared war and only responding to attack. The Brazilian army was concentrated in the south habitually to defend against Argentina and in 1940 numbered 93,000, not 60,000 (p. 123). The United States did not take over Brazilian bases in the north-east but rather built them, mostly from scratch (p. 114). Natal is not a state, but the capital of Rio Grande do Norte (p. 115), and the victory of Monte Castello was a Brazilian one, part of the successful Allied attack on the Belvedere-Torraccia ridge on 21 February 1944, not in March (p. 125). Finally, to label Brazil a wartime 'satellite' is offensive, demeaning and factually inaccurate (p. 107).

The writing is livelier in the last two chapters, possibly because it better reflects the works cited.

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Thomas Fischer, *Die Souveränität der Schwachen: Lateinamerika und der Völkerbund, 1920–1936* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2012), pp. 459, €68.00, pb.

Thomas Fischer's study of Latin America's role in the League of Nations draws on exhaustive research to reach a sobering conclusion: the League's impact on Latin America was marginal because the European powers leading it never took much