

The eagle and the springbok: essays on Nigeria and South Africa. By Adekeye Adebajo. Johannesburg: Jacana. 2018. 304 pp. Pb.: £13.00. ISBN 978 1 928232 47 6.

'The Nigerian eagle must soar and the South African springbok gallop in sync, if Africa is to be reborn' (p. 249). With this sentence, Adekeye Adebajo concludes his book. In a sense this sentence also retrospectively captures the mainly prescriptive essence of *The eagle and the springbok: essays on Nigeria and South Africa*, a text set to become one of the most important on this relationship, billed by Adebajo to be 'Africa's most indispensable' (p. 1).

The book is a collection of thirteen essays of such breadth and sculp that they deal with the continent's two major powers in punctilious detail; from their tribal and ethnic compositions and their implications, to their soft power and economic levers on the continent which they have so dominated. At once a set of historical accounts and economic analyses, it also manages to tie in contemporary debates and discourses about the nature of African integration, xenophobia, and the personalities of various leaders and their importance for both their nations and their regions.

Nevertheless, one important missing feature is a connective tissue to show this relationship as particularly 'indispensable'. Moreover, the book is sometimes typified by paragraphs which could be construed as too idealistic in their characterisation of South Africa's relations with its immediate neighbours: 'As Mexicans have noted in relation to the United States, Batswana, Swazis, Basotho and Namibians certainly have many reasons to complain that they are too close to South Africa, and too far from God' (p. 37). Indeed, South Africa's posture within SACU is defined as zero-sum and mercantilist; a continuation of Cecil Rhodes' imperialism (p. 244), while Nigeria is congratulated as having escaped, or successfully reshaped, its colonial-era Lugardian grand designs and assumed regional leadership. This highlights another issue with the book. Not having defined what hegemony consists of and instead carried out a parallel compare-and-contrast of Pax Nigeriana and Pax South Africana, Adebajo misses the opportunity, in part II (tantalisingly entitled 'Hegemony' [p. 58-106]), to elucidate exactly what hegemony (already an increasingly loose concept with no universal definition) is in the African context. Forced to read between the lines, one tentatively reaches the (performative) definition of an African regional hegemon to lie in its comparative economic wealth, combined with a self-perceived legitimate sense of responsibility and a history of combining both to achieve a set of achieve outcomes (p. 105), by force and against domestic popular opinion (p.74) if deemed necessary. The chief immediate outcome for Adebajo in the next era *must* be regional and eventually continental integration (p. 12). But these are further loaded and contested concepts not provided explication in the book.

This takes nothing away from the overall importance of the book, however. For it is important for not only what it describes and prescribes, but also the questions it raises; the hallmark of IR scholarship by many accounts. Most important of all, in light of the vacillating economic fortunes of South Africa and Nigeria, their tug-of-war

positioning as Africa's largest economy (between 2014 and 2017, they switched back-and-forth twice), as well as the slow but steady climb-up of Ethiopia (Addis Ababa already dubbed Africa's 'capital city' due to its status as the AU's citadel) and Rwanda (led by the strong-willed Kagame) in their respective regions, the book is important because it raises critical questions about which of the two regional giants can claim to be Africa's representative and on what grounds they may do so in international forums such as the G20, the United Nations Security Council and the BRICS association of emerging economies (p. 40; 104; 245).

And if Adebajo is prescriptive, he is also empirical. With its great scope of history, the book situates the Abuja-Tshwane relationship into a four-phased timeframe relayed in Shakespearean lexicon: the apartheid era (Act I), the Mandela-Abacha era (Act II), the Mbeki-Obasanjo (Act III), and the present era (Act IV). Usefully, Adebajo demarcates the switch-up in acts one and two, wherein Nigeria and South Africa swapped their roles as prophet and pariah, and distils the Mbeki-Obasanjo era as the zenith of the relationship, and the 2008-17 era as a 'decade of troubles' (p. 8), as Tshwane allegedly prioritised Angola over Nigeria.

Herein lies one of the book's strengths, therefore. As a modulated registry of the past twenty-five years of relations between these states, the book is highly pertinent. This is a much-needed corrective to the all too limited scholarly bibliography on the Nigeria-South Africa relationship and will make a fine reference point not only for debates on both emergent and long-standing politico-economic issues, but also for a historiography of the relationship, including the roles of the heads who captained these states, going right back to the foundations of these polities still busily weaving themselves into countries (p. 3-4). Also not to be overlooked is its stylistic candidness, which will make any who sojourn on such a referral do so seamlessly. If Adebajo sought to revive the essay as a medium (p. 6), he has also created a rich catalogue to be attended to by any and all seeking to understand the intricate – and sometimes unbelievably petty (p. 11) – workings of Nigeria and South Africa's almost Romulus-Remus-like odyssey.

Bhaso Ndzendze, University of Johannesburg, South Africa