

Research Africa Reviews Vol. 3 No. 2, August 2019

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Muhammed Haron, *Connecting South-South Communities: The Narrative of South African-Malaysian Relations*. Newcastle-Upon Tyne : Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018; 380 pp. ISBN: 1-5275-1127-8.

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Connecting South-South Communities is a rich and captivating narrative written by Muhammed Haron. It attempts to assess the relationship between two regions and two nation-states (South Africa and Malaysia) from the 1960s onwards, particularly emphasizing post-1990 relations. The book encompasses eight chapters. While Chapter One is both a general introduction and a literature review which scrutinizes the bilateral relationship between South Africa and Asian states, Chapter Two delineates the theoretical framework which shapes the study.

This chapter is a journey into “critical theory” and the twin processes of modernization and globalization. It tackles note-worthy variables that influence the relationship and partnership between South Africa and Malaysia, paving the way for a closer study of the bilateral relationship as it has evolved over the decades. This not only contextualizes South Africa and Malaysia in their regions through evaluating the respective regional structures but it also ponders the notion of South-South cooperation. The subsequent chapters present a thorough analysis of the two nations’ relationship. Initially, the author provides in-depth insight into the relationship that spanned from 1948 to 1990. The second part of this chapter meticulously surveys the growth of the relationship from a diplomatic one in the 1990s to a solid partnership by 2016. Besides scrutinizing and analyzing this relationship, the chapter sets a comparison between the philosophies which the elite leadership in both states had endorsed during the mid-1990s, namely Asian Renaissance vis-à-vis African Renaissance.

Chapter Five assesses the commercial bonds that tie the two states. In the meantime, this chapter not only discusses the nature of the economic partnership that had been forged over roughly 25 years but also denotes and scrutinizes trade figures for the aforementioned period. Chapter Six explores the contributions which have been implemented by non-state actor relations; furthermore, it offers an insight into this field from a completely overlooked dimension. In this chapter, the emphasis is on one Malaysian transnational cultural activist, Ismail Hussein, who made a substantial contribution to international relations.

As the book nears its conclusion, the author devotes a substantial contribution to the question of sovereignty; he also narrates the notion of sovereignty through both South African and Malaysian stories. In the same vein, the chapter casts light on a few vital case studies, such as minority/majority rights and human rights which illustrate the limitations of sovereignty as experienced in South Africa and Malaysia respectively. Finally, the author concludes the study by displaying the general research findings. In addition, it mentions the nation-states’ respective inclinations within the process of globalization and

the nature of the respective identities reflected in the contemporary international state system.

Overall, this book is a substantial contribution to understanding South-South relations, mainly those between South Africa and Malaysia. It is worth mentioning that very few researchers beyond Westhuizen and Conde dared to tackle and scrutinize this relationship thoroughly. Nevertheless, the scope of this work extends beyond what Conde covered, substantially displaying how bilateral relations evolved over the past few decades. Additionally, the author managed to successfully and tactfully consider crucial variables and narrate South Africa and Malaysia's stories by situating each of them within their respective regions. In his story-telling, Haron stresses that religion and culture are two variables which should not be overlooked in international relations (Stone-Mediatore, 2003).

The book is a library-like work where hundreds of references are introduced and presented. The book's affluence in resources makes it an encyclopedia that fills large gaps in the literature and provides academia with a scrutiny of under-researched fields. I dearly recommend this book to be assigned as cornerstone reading material to students majoring in international relations with a focus on South-South relationships. In addition, it should be translated into other languages, such as Arabic, French, and Spanish in order to reach a broader readership in Africa and the Middle East region.

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ISSN 2575-6990