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Chapter 1 Summary

Brazil’s Troubled Rise

*Brazil: The Troubled Rise of a Global Power*, by Michael Reid, begins with the backdrop of a conference in London with the beloved president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. Reid described his purpose of this conference as “‘silent revolution in Brazil, the recovery of a country’s self-esteem,’” (Reid 4). His motivation for the improvement of his country is a typical theme of the Brazil we are introduced to in the book. Even Lula himself was resilient in his run for the presidency, running three times before elected in his fourth running. And it’s worked, under Lula’s reign over thirty million people could join the “new middle class” and step away from poverty (Reid 4).

After describing the feelings of the nation, this chapter introduces the country with general facts. Reid stated the size of the country in population and geographically. Brazil is also depicted through its exports and imports, with their main exports being sugar cane, food, and oil. The highest three companies in the country were Petrobas, an oil company, Vale, a mining company, and Embraer, an aircraft maker. The two biggest private banks of the nation were Itau and Bradesco.

Brazil was credited with change, however it’s hopefulness fueled by liberalism was often insipid and expectations fell short. Although it does not face any sort of conflict, in fact Reid states “…it was free of the religious or ethnic tensions and terrorist violence that plagued the other three [countries]. It has no border disputes nor does it face any obvious strategic threats,” (6), its politicians and businessmen tend to take a more laisses-faire approach to their duties. While they hold great ideas and prospects for the future, many plans fall through due to a lack of education or complexity of the political system. Outside of the red tape involved in the execution of a plan, corruption and violence runs rampant in the country. Many politicians switch parties, or are a part of multiple parties at a time, making it even easier for plans to be vetoed. Even Lula changed his political views from an extreme socialist to a more central one like the president of the time during his times running for presidency.

The final pages of this chapter introduce the background for the history of the country. It shows how little other cultures know about the culture of Brazil, which is mostly due to the language barrier. In fact, Portuguese Brazil’s history is extremely separate from its neighbors, since Brazil remained united throughout its history. Finally, Brazil is compared to America because of their “strong sense of exceptionalism” (Reid 11).

Reflection

This chapter was critical in explaining the many different aspects of the country. While it is easy to explain only the pros or the cons of a topic, presenting both is important to fully understand why Brazil is so misunderstood. Overall, I feel that this chapter provided a helpful summary to the country as a whole.

Work Cited

Reid, Michael. Brazil: The Troubled Rise of a Global Power. New Haven, Yale University Press, 2014. Print.