

A Formação Territorial da região das Guianas

Territorial formation of the Guiana region

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Resumo

Por mais de 9,5 mil anos os indígenas reinaram absolutos na construção de territorialidades na região das Guianas, uma parte da Amazônia entre os rios Orinoco e Amazonas, que margeia o oceano Atlântico. Com o encontro dos dois mundos, metáfora que se refere ao contato dos indígenas com os exploradores europeus, tudo mudou e os últimos cinco séculos foram marcados por guerras, matanças e diversas reestruturações territoriais nas Guianas. Através de uma perspectiva geopolítica como fulcro metodológico, e ancorado em revisão de literatura e cartografia temática, este texto examina a relação local-global da região ao longo dos cinco séculos de contatos, demarcando fatos e contextos importantes na Europa que imprimiram mudanças significativas no espaço político das Guianas. Dos momentos relevantes, as grandes navegações, as revoluções burguesas e a Guerra Fria foram os mais importantes para as transformações que ocorreram na região. Aliado a isso, há que se destacar o papel crucial de tratados de limites, com especial atenção para dois: o de Tordesilhas (1494) e o de Madri (1750). O texto conclui que a busca por riquezas e os momentos de instabilidades na Europa, seja por recomposições territoriais lá existentes, seja por conflitos, determinaram reordenamentos importantes nas Guianas que a tornaram o que ela é hoje, uma região complexa do ponto de vista geopolítico.

Palavras-chave: Formação Territorial; Geopolítica; Geo-história; região das Guianas.

Abstract

For more than 9,500 years, the indigenous people reigned supreme in the construction of territorialities in the Guiana region, a part of the Amazon between the Orinoco and Amazon rivers, which borders the Atlantic Ocean. With the encounter of both worlds, a metaphor that refers to the contact of the indigenous people with the European explorers, everything changed and the last five centuries have been marked by wars, killings, and various territorial restructurings in the Guianas. Through a geopolitical perspective as a methodological fulcrum, and anchored in literature review and thematic cartography, this text examines the local-global relationship of the region over the five centuries of contacts, demarcating important facts and contexts in Europe that imprinted significant changes on the political space of the Guianas. Of the relevant moments, the great navigations, the bourgeois revolutions, and the Cold War were the most important for the transformations that occurred in the region. In addition, boundary treaties played a crucial role, with special attention to two of them: the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494) and the Treaty of Madrid (1750). The text concludes that the search for riches and moments of instability in Europe, whether due to territorial recompositions there or conflicts, determined important reorganizations in the Guianas that made it what it is today, a complex region from the geopolitical point of view.

Keywords: Territorial Formation; Geopolitics; Geo-history; Guiana Region.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Guianas, a little known and studied region in international Amazonia, have passed through many territorial transformations since their first inhabitants, the indigenous people, populated them more than 10,000 years ago (ERIKSEN, 2011). Different ethnolinguistic communities created their geographies, established their interaction networks, and promoted their spacial practices with flexible territorialities from a type of semi-nomadism, considering the natural conditions (relief, soil, vegetation, hydrography) that imposed constraints and, at the same time, potentialities for the development of their communities.

After 9.5 thousand years building their narratives and promoting their social-spatial interactions, the indigenous people had their first contact with non-indigenous people, European explorers whose mission was to recognize areas with great potential for natural exploitation, mainly for the voracious search for precious metals.

It was not long before the traditionally occupied lands were plundered and placed at the service of foreigners, who took them over under the justification of bringing civilization, slicing up, in their own way, the innumerable indigenous communities that until then had reigned absolute. These territorial divisions, or slicing and dicing as we have explained, were not linear and uniform, they have changed over time and maintained a clear relationship to what was happening in the European context.

In that portion of the international Amazon, we find the only South American territories that were not Iberian colonies (Republic of Guyana, Suriname, and French Guiana), constituting a true interface between the Amazonian and Caribbean worlds. The region as a whole has, in effect, a territorial extension based on plantation economies of European colonial expression, based on the slavery of African peoples (TAGLIONI; CRUSE, 2011; SILVA, 2017) and numerous indigenous communities. These characteristics make the coast of the Guianas a Caribbean extension of South America where English, Dutch, and French are also spoken as official languages, in addition to multiple Creole dialects, the result of centuries of miscegenation, which were amplified with the arrival of Asian peoples (Indians, Javanese, and Chinese) hired for hard and poorly paid work between the late nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries.

In the present text we will analyze the local-global relationship of the Guianas over the five centuries of contacts, conflicts, and territorial orderings that have occurred there since the arrival of the first European explorers at the end of the fifteenth century, which have outlined significant changes in the political space of

the Guianas. To accomplish this, we explore in the first section of this paper the configurations and conditions experienced in the Guianas, on the one hand, and in Europe, on the other, before the first contacts between the two worlds, an allusion to the moment of contact between the European world and the American world. Following this, the great European navigations and their repercussions in the Guiana region are the common thread of the section. The third section analyzes the redefinition of the borders in the Guianas as a consequence of the Iberian Union and Treaty of Madrid, two important landmarks for the political-territorial uses of the region. In the fourth section, brief evaluations are made on the impacts of the bourgeois revolutions and the Napoleonic period for profound changes that emerged in the Guianas with the first two independences that occurred there (Venezuela and Brazil). To conclude, we evaluate the politico-territorial changes that were undertaken at the time of the Cold War, which, in its wake, marks the moment of the most recent sovereignties in the region (Republic of Guyana and Suriname) and of the transformation of French Guiana as an integral part of France.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Geopolitical orders and the study of the Guianas

Heriberto Cairo (2008), when establishing bases to think geopolitical theories for Latin America, presents some central ideas based on Agnew and Corbridge (1995) and Agnew (2003). In the first case, the authors interpret geopolitical orders constituted by the set of rules, institutions, activities and strategies that become routines in each historical period, assuming determined geographical characteristics (CAIRO, 2008, p. 2). These geopolitical orders are sustained by power relations which can be coercive or consensual. Despite the line adopted, the figure of a dominant power is not imperatively assumed, since the material practices and hegemonic representations, which can be multiple, establish meanings tuned to each other.

In the second case, Agnew (2003) assesses that geopolitical orders are grounded in spaces defined by successive geopolitical discourses that organize different ways of viewing spaces. For these key moments, the author calls them geopolitical eras. In this regard, Cairo (2008, p. 2) points out that numerous principles interrelate in different ways, producing a distinctive mix of geopolitical representations and practices, and in this case, too, geopolitical eras are associated with hegemonic periods, even if they do not exactly coincide with them. Agnew (2003), in turn, proposes that the dominant geopolitical imagination, which went backwards in geopolitical eras, would have ancient roots in the growth of capitalism and the formation of states in Europe (in

the early modern era and the European expansion over the rest of the world), which coincides with the main starting point of this text for the analyses of the local-global relationship between the two worlds analyzed. Based on the above theoretical foundation, the reflections made in this text have two methodological pillars: a) the literature consulted to support the analyses of several centuries of history and geography about the Guianas; and b) the thematic cartography done in order to illustrate the spatial behavior of territorialities and maritime-territorial disputes that were established during the important moments highlighted in this work.

Defining the study area

The text takes as its privileged cutout for analysis the Guiana region. Although the area of the Guianas has no precision, which is why it is common for its extension in the western part to vary in some studies (HAMMOND, 2005), we will use the cut established by Lézy (2000), which is a rereading of the geographic unit analyzed by Reclus and Vidal de La Blache at the end of the 19th century. By this parameter, the region has an area of over 1.7 million km², divided between 5 countries: Venezuela (states of Bolívar, Amazonas and part of Delta Amacuro), Brazil (states of Amapá, Roraima and parts of Pará and Amazonas), Republic of Guyana, Suriname and French Guiana (a Territorial Collectivity of France in South America). Its extension is bounded by the Orinoco and Amazon Rivers and the Atlantic Ocean (Figure 1).

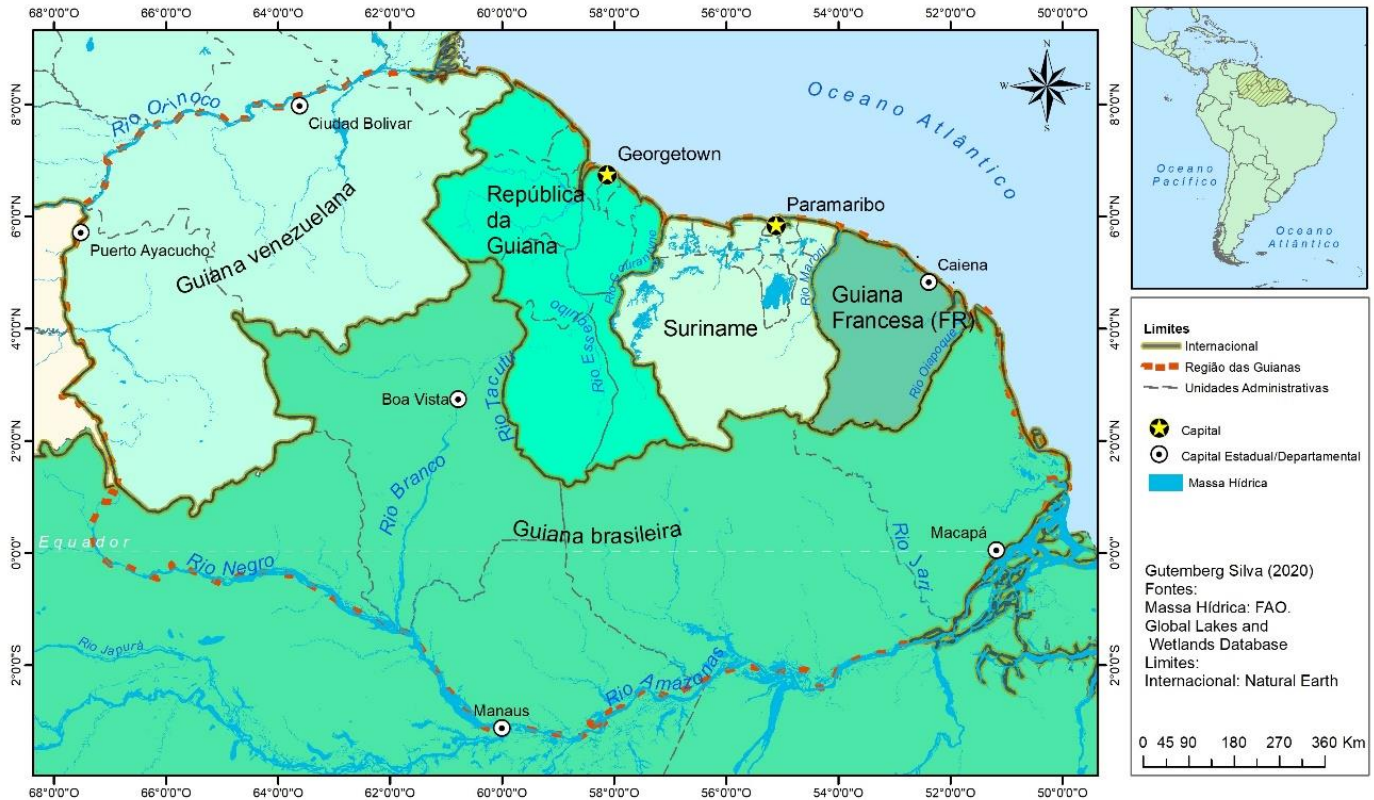


Figure 1 – Area covered by the Guyanas region.

The first accounts of the rich nature of the Guianas are attributed to the British Walter Raleigh in *The Discovery of Guyana* (RALEIGH, 1596), written one year after his first expedition to the Amazon. In his accounts, the author presents a rich detailing of the natural beauties he saw in his mission to Guyana, now in the Venezuelan area. Three centuries later, in 1895, Elisée Reclus analyzed the Guiana region for its natural aspects (size, shape and location) in his famous book *Universal Geography*. A little later, at the beginning of the 20th century, Vidal de La Blache also read the region, but now for its historical and cartographic aspects. He observed that there was a great landscape harmony in the macro-region, whose borders are the Orinoco and the Amazon, when analyzing old maps of South America (LÉZY, 2000). Even so, we would say that it was from the 1950s that numerous texts were published on the Guiana region, in different fields of knowledge (HAMMOND, 2005), giving strength to the creation of groups of researchers aimed at evaluating historical, geographic, and anthropological aspects of the region (SILVA, 2016).

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

European conditioning for great navigations and the arrival in the Guianas

At the close of the Middle Ages, the world that Europeans knew was limited to the Middle East, North Africa, and the Indies, the generic name for the Far East (East Asia). Most Europeans knew this region only through stories such as that of the Venetian Marco Polo. In the 15th century, European countries wanting to buy spices (pepper, saffron, ginger, cinnamon, and other spices) had to turn to merchants in Venice or Genoa, who had a monopoly on these products.

Once they had access to the oriental markets - India was the main one - the European bourgeois, especially the Italians, charged high prices for the spices they brought from the East by the Mediterranean Sea, and therefore they profited a lot. The Crusades, however, generated negative geopolitical effects to the Europeans, since, in that conflicting context, there was an Arab blockage to the trade until then established with the East by that sea. Even trapped for commercial continuity, finding a new way to the Indies was a difficult task for the Europeans, even though it was very much desired. Portugal and Spain greatly desired to have direct access to the oriental sources in order to also profit from that interesting trade. Another important element that stimulated the navigations at that time was the prospect of European nations to conquer new lands. These nations wanted to obtain raw materials, precious metals, and products not found in Europe, such as American spices.

Besides the bourgeoisie, some kings were also interested in the maritime-commercial expansion, so much so that they financed a large part of this enterprise, because, with the increase of commerce, they could also increase the collection of taxes for their kingdoms. More money would mean more power for the absolutist kings of the time, who wanted to take advantage of this moment to spread the Christian faith among people considered "pagans".

Around the time of contact with Europeans, the Karib language was dominant in much of the Guiana region, while there were several pockets of Arawak, Tupi, Múra, and Saliba speakers. As the colonizers explored the territory, they realized that the indigenous populations were divided into hundreds of peoples who spoke different languages and had different customs and habits.

The indigenous people would have reached South America around 12,000 B.C. Although in the beginning they would have despised the Amazon in favor of the Andes, the presence of these peoples is proven in the Guianas, around the time of the current territories of the Republic of Guyana and Suriname, from 8000 B.C.

(LÉZY, 2000). Besides their varied histories and languages, their political-economic organizations were also different. Grenand (1982) identifies three sets of indigenous groups: more or less sedentary agricultural societies on the coasts and floodplains of the eastern Guianas, semi-sedentary ones along the rivers in the dryland forest, and finally some hunter-gatherer groups in the interior.

Thus, the Amazon forest, with its Guyanese part considered "primitive", was highly exploited by human groups even before the Christian era. Rostain (1994) proved the existence of several ancient fields with small flattened hills to avoid excess moisture at the forest edge, showing mastery of agricultural techniques, even if rudimentary. Hurault (1972), who described a type of artificial hills for cultivating in the middle of the swamps on the coast of the Guianas, highlights the importance of agriculture among the peoples of the regional interior, despite the difficulties of the relief and soil, not very favorable, which made them prefer to stay by the rivers and practice semi-nomadism. Some tribes, also in the interior, would have practiced "itinerant plantations" with the domestication of many species, as Lézy (2000) points out. Such indigenous geographies underlie the foundation that population densities in the interior of the Guianas were much higher at that time than they are today (ERIKSEN, 2011).

Jean Hurault (1972) shows an absence of relations between coast and interior in the Guianas, separated by numerous small waterfalls and, in our view, also influenced by a relief (See SILVA, 2021) that imprinted specific behaviors on the indigenous people. Devèze (1968) mentions that the territorial configurations, at the time, created small boundaries between the indigenous peoples, which, in other words, means that each ethnolinguistic group possessed its geography and maintained its territorialities in a very peculiar way.

In order to develop the communities, individual or collective huts, often on stilts, were built, forming several villages of more or less 30 people (DEVÈZE, 1968). The peoples created a kind of flexible territoriality through semi-nomadism, since the villages rarely exceeded 10 years of existence in a given place. Hurault (1972) has shown how these inland villages followed each other like a rosary along the rivers to facilitate transport and communications and avoid unexpected surprises in case of war, demonstrating a refined geopolitical knowledge on the part of the indigenous people.

The worst consequence of European explorations and colonization for the indigenous people was the extinction of many communities, either through wars, or as a consequence of foreign or exotic diseases such as influenza, measles, and smallpox, which often killed entire indigenous societies, or by imposing a new way of life on the indigenous people. The colonization of the Guianas was therefore devastating for the indigenous

people and this loss - which also occurred in other parts of America, is described as one of the greatest demographic disasters in human history (ERIKSEN, 2011).

The great navigations and their territorial impacts in the Guiana region

Great Navigations is the expression used for a historical moment in which the great European maritime expeditions took place between the 15th and 16th centuries. The pioneers were the Portuguese and the Spanish, followed by the English, French and Dutch. Several factors made the expeditions possible from that moment on, but the following should be highlighted: i) the improvement of navigation techniques, ii) the obsessive search for precious metals (mercantilism period); iii) the need to discover a new sea route to the Indies; and, finally, iv) the expansion of the Christian faith around the world.

Portugal, a country located on the Atlantic coast and unable to expand within the Iberian Peninsula, was the first to venture into the Atlantic Ocean with the conquest of Ceuta in 1415, an important trading post in North Africa. Throughout the 15th century, little by little, the Portuguese reconnoitered the entire west coast of Africa until they reached the Indies in 1498. The Spanish, almost eighty years after Portugal, followed in the expeditionary process with Christopher Columbus. Looking for an alternative route to reach the Indies, this navigator abandoned the route that bordered the African coast and followed the Atlantic Ocean in open sea. In 1492, Columbus docks in the American world and this fact starts a long process of occupation, exploration and domination of what would be the new world.

In order to define the possessions and the rights to exploit the riches, a series of treaties established between the European powers played a decisive role. The first, and one of the most important for international limits, was the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494). Through it, Pope Alexander VI delimited, through an imaginary line (Figure 2), the exploration rights of Spain and Portugal in the Americas, without even knowing them completely. The pope, of Spanish origin, actually wanted to attribute the potentially discovered lands only to the Spanish, leaving Africa and Asia to the Portuguese (LÉZY, 2000).

Due to the established configuration, the Guiana region became entirely Spanish, although the beginning of explorations took place much later. England, France and Holland, other powers of the time, which became equally expeditionary, complained, did not recognize the Iberian monopoly in the sharing of South America, and invested in maritime campaigns to the new world, although with less expression and capillarity in their actions and conquests.

The expedition that inaugurated a relevant cycle of European territorial occupation in the Guianas was carried out by Alonzo de Ojeda and Amerigo Vespucci in 1499, when they left Cadiz in Spain and reached the coast of what would become the capital of the Republic of Guyana, Georgetown, and from there they traveled a good part of the Venezuelan coast. The following year, in 1500, the Spaniard Vicente Yañez Pinzón, who was part of Christopher Columbus' first expedition, reached the northern coast of Brazil and recognized the entire coast of the Guiana region, from the Amazon to the Orinoco.

Subsequently, a series of other expeditionary missions were created to reconnoiter the region along its borders, except for Fedemann's mission, in 1530, and Orellana's, in 1541, which covered part of the interior of the Guianas. The latter was also the first to cover the southern edge of the region, from Manaus to the mouth of the Amazon River. Of the Guianas expeditions, the most extensive was that of Lope de Aguirre in 1560, as he traveled along the southern and northern borders of the region at a time when travel took years (SILVA, 2021).

Because of legends that they would have heard from the natives, the Europeans' movements through the Guianas, starting in 1520, were often in search of riches that would be found in great quantities in that region. The stories, weak in evidence and rich in speculation, confirmed the existence of a great kingdom, Manoa¹ – an Amazonian city full of palaces made of diamonds, and streets and rivers covered in gold, located in the heart of the Guianas. The goal of the search of the so-called doradistas, that is, those who sought El Dorado, or the Golden Man (Figure 2), represented a chapter in a long line of expeditions mounted in obsessive searches for riches with looting, killing and expropriation (LÈZY, 2000).

Raleigh's record of his first voyage to the coast of the Guianas in search of El Dorado in 1595 exemplifies the magnitude of expectation resulting from decades of almost unfathomable effort by Spanish doradistas in search of great treasure. This gave the Guianas a reputation as gold-rich territories, and thus aroused the covetousness of several European nations. The rivalries and even wars that ensued due to the search for gold forced the European countries involved to try to define boundaries between their respective colonies, without regard, of course, for the traditional delimitations made by the native peoples, resulting in arbitrary top-down type boundaries that separated many indigenous communities of the same ethnicity.

¹ El Dorado, Manoa or Manoa do Dorado are names that refer to a legend that began in the 1530s with the story of a chief or priest of the Muíscas, indigenous people of Colombia, who covered himself with gold dust and plunged into a lake in the Andes. Initially a golden man, golden Indian, or golden king, it was later fantasized as a place, the kingdom or the city of this legendary chief, rich in gold.

Territorial redefinitions in the Guiana region: From the Iberian Union to the Treaty of Madrid

In the history of territorial occupation of the Guianas, the end of the 16th century and the beginning of the following century was the most turbulent, mainly due to the Iberian Union (1580-1640). During this period, the Portuguese and Spanish Guianas were ruled by a single king, Philip II. This historical fact marked the Portuguese expansion into lands hitherto Spanish in the Guianas region and, as a consequence, the Lusitanian military occupation began at the mouth of the Amazon River and its extensive waterway network through forts and missions (Figure 2).

There was a veiled dispute among the explorers for dominance over the territory of the Sertão Drugs², both by those encouraged by the Crown (Entradas) and by those who promoted individual initiatives (Bandeiras). To further complicate matters, there was also the appropriation interest of the other expeditionary colonial powers. At that point in Iberian relations, the Treaty of Tordesillas had lost its meaning, while the Portuguese and Spanish possessions had become increasingly disrespected by the Dutch, English, and French, who had managed to create small settlements on the Atlantic coast of the Guianas, despised by the Iberians. Even the balance of power resulting from some wars in Europe and the respective peace treaties - such as that of Breda in 1667 and of Utrecht in 1713 - had consequences on the possession and delimitation of the Guyanese colonies, causing the monopoly of Portugal and Spain to collapse.

Missions and forts played a determining role in European expansion and territorial domination of the Amazon (Figure 2). Missions established by Capuchins and Jesuits in Venezuela, Jesuits along the Rio Negro, the lower Amazon, and the coasts of Amapá and French Guiana, Moravians in the Republic of Guyana (Berbice) and Suriname, and various Protestant denominations (south and northwest) in the Republic of Guyana allowed an advance of settlement by the sedentarization of indigenous people and explorers.

² Some examples of Sertão Drugs are cinnamon, clove, indigo, aromatic roots, oil seeds, and sarsaparilla.



Figure 2 - Forts and Missions in the Guiana region (1700-1850)

Since then, a new system of territorial control was configured, which relied on at least four elements: fortifications, nuclear settlement, creation of administrative units, and geographical knowledge of the territory (MACHADO, 1989). In the coastal Guianas, in particular, the territory had two new uses: supplying the European metropolises by developing an export agriculture (mainly sugar cane and spices) based on the work of African slaves brought by the slave trade, and protecting the Caribbean colonies (MARTINIERE, 1987; TAGLIONI and CRUSE, 2011).

Numerous forts enabled the defense of these nuclei and their respective sovereignties: Spanish in Venezuela, Dutch and British in Guyana and Suriname, French in French Guiana, and Portuguese in the delta and along the Amazon, Negro and Branco rivers. However, rivalries and wars between the five European powers did not prevent these forts from frequently changing hands during the period from 1700 to 1850, at times of great instability in the region and in Europe.

Another consequence of the European situation of Iberian Union was the signing of the Treaty of Madrid in 1750, which changed Spain's territorial control in the Guianas. Through this treaty, Portugal became dominant

in the extension of land in the region with the expansion of its missions into the interior of the Amazon (Figure 2), leaving Spain with a portion of land nine times smaller than it had in the Guianas before the said treaty. At that time, Holland, England, and France had already consolidated their occupation of much of the Atlantic rim of the Guianas after centuries of litigation, wars, and changes in territorial dominance, although the problem of international boundaries is a separate chapter and unresolved to this day in parts of the region.

The Napoleonic period and the first independences in the Guiana region

The French Revolution of 1789 also had a significant impact on the Guiana region, since the revolutionary wars opposing France to England's allies involved the colonizing powers of the Americas. The French occupied the entire Iberian peninsula between 1808 and 1814, in what became known as the Napoleonic era. Napoleon Bonaparte, who was continuing the military policy that unfolded from the French Revolution because of the hostile coalitions that were established, tried to pierce the blockade imposed by the British through Spain and take revenge on allies of the British, such as Portugal.

When the Spanish monarchy was overthrown by Bonapartist actions, an independence movement sprang up in its American colonies with Simon Bolivar as its leader, a young Creole born in the then Venezuelan colony who had studied in Europe where he drew revolutionary inspirations. Gradually new independent states were formed in Spanish America until, in 1811, it was Venezuela's turn. For the first time, a part of the Guianas escaped European domination and was integrated into a specifically South American sovereignty.

During Bonaparte's expansion, the Portuguese courts (the parliament) - cornered and about to be dominated by Napoleon's troops - take refuge in Rio de Janeiro, in 1808, with the help of England. With such a move, this hitherto discredited colony in South America becomes the center of Portuguese imperial power. In retaliation against Bonaparte, the Portuguese Regent, the future King João VI, invaded, also with English help, French Guiana. During Bonaparte's expansion, the Portuguese courts (the parliament) - cornered and about to be dominated by Napoleon's troops - take refuge in Rio de Janeiro, in 1808, with the help of England. With such a move, this hitherto discredited colony in South America becomes the center of Portuguese imperial power. In

retaliation against Bonaparte, the Portuguese Regent, the future King João VI, invaded, also with English help, French Guiana.

From a geopolitical point of view, this French colony became an interface with the Caribbean world from which Portugal was totally absent (MARTINIÈRE, 1978). In addition, the invasion made it possible to insert French Guiana into a network of the Portuguese slave trade and the English trade circuits. After the fall of Napoleon Bonaparte and the restoration of the French monarchy, Portugal returned French Guiana to France through the 1817 Treaty of Paris, which this time stipulated much clearer limits at the border of the Oiapoque River, which had not occurred in the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht.

In 1821, the end of the French occupation, which had already occurred for seven years, made the now King João VI return to Lisbon due to pressure from the Cortes. In Brazil, which had achieved the status of a kingdom associated with Portugal with the transfer of the royalty in 1808, the king had left his son Pedro I as Regent. It wasn't long before Pedro I, in addition to refusing the Portuguese Cortes' recommendations that he return to Portugal, proclaimed Brazil's independence in 1822 and became its emperor. With this, Brazil became the second independent country in the Guiana region and possessed the largest territorial extension, in addition to total control of the Amazon River (see Figure 1). France, in turn, took advantage of Brazil's independence to proclaim the Treaty of Paris null and void, and the Franco-Brazilian dispute remained simmering until it was resolved-in Brazil's favor-in 1900.

The abolitions of slavery in the 19th century, in which the Guianas were fully immersed, was another event with strong European pressure. Many farms were abandoned, as the now ex-slaves - preferring to live in the cities or explore small plantations further inland - were systematically leaving the large farms, which destabilized the economy of the still colonies (English, French, and Dutch). With the lack of labor, labor contracts were signed with Asian populations (Indians, Chinese, and Javanese), which caused more mestizaje in the settlement of the northern edge of the region with profound impacts on the economic, social, and political history of the Guianas ever since.

The (in) definite boundaries and the last independences of the Guiana region

After the first independences in the Guianas in the 19th century, the region went through more than a century without profound territorial changes, despite the border definitions, even though today we still have unresolved issues, both territorial and maritime (CAIRO; LOIS, 2014; SILVA, 2017).

Cervo (1985) points out that Brazil, fearing a penetration of the still European colonies in the Amazon, initiated a policy of border definitions with all its neighbors in the Guianas. Thus, dyads were finally defined with French Guiana in 1900, with English Guyana in 1904, with Venezuela in 1905, and with Dutch Guiana in 1906 (Figure 4). It should be noted that the 1904 arbitration was the only one that was not in favor of Brazil: it only obtained 40% of the territory surrounding an Amazon tributary, allowing the British, at the time, access to the Amazon basin.

Satisfied with the border readjustments in its favor, despite the half defeat with English Guyana, Brazil was no longer concerned with the European Guianas until the Cold War. The fact is that, unlike Venezuela and Brazil, the English and Dutch Guianas only gained their independence in the second half of the 20th century, awakening, with their political developments, a geopolitical fear on the part of Brazil, including here French Guiana, which would not even become a country, but an integral part of France in 19463.

Although for the geopolitician Mário Travassos Brazil had despised the coastal Guianas because they were European, others like Lysias Rodrigues and Golbery do Couto e Silva feared the presence of European colonies, stressing the danger of porous borders with unpopulated parts of Brazil, and highlighting the role of English missionaries and smugglers that could cause turbulence in the occupation of the territory. Another danger was the influence of communists in European metropolises, who could interfere in their colonies, especially the French one (GRANGER, 2013), but the greatest danger came from the political evolution of English Guyana where, with the end of World War II, popular political consciousness and demands for independence grew in all segments of its society, something that resulted in the founding of the main political parties there: the People's Progressive Party (PPP), founded on January 1, 1950, and the People's National Congress (PNC), created through a split from the PPP in 1957.

These parties, with an ethnic Afro-descendant base, on the one hand, and Indian, on the other, gained space in the colonial political scene, which was determinant for the independence of British Guiana, which would become, in 1966, the Cooperative Republic of Guyana. Since then, the country has been governed by

³ The French departmentalization law (political and legislative assimilation to the metropolis) made, at the request of its parliamentarians, French Guiana leave the status of colony, which was meaningless since almost all the inhabitants enjoyed French nationality, to become an integral part of France (MAM LAM FOUCK; ANAKESA, 2013). This is a mode of decolonization recognized even by the United Nations (UN).

mostly pro-socialist administrations, but also within the framework of the Commonwealth⁴. This political evolution in the Cold War context greatly worried the Brazilian military governments, assuming alignment with the Western and Atlantic camp since 1964 when, in Brazil, a military coup took place that lasted until 1985.

Dutch Guiana, for its part, followed a very similar path. Besides becoming a constituent country of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, as a corollary of the Atlantic Charter (1941) and the Charter of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (1952), it was a consensus among almost all parties in the Dutch parliament that Suriname, costly and over whose affairs the Dutch government in practice had no control, should become independent as soon as possible, which occurred in November 1975. At that time, the people of Dutch Guiana were divided in their opinion on the subject of independence, which caused almost half of the population, especially the more educated part and of Asian origin, to prefer to migrate to the metropolis.

A military coup in 1980 and a civil war in the decade that followed ended the hopes for a prosperous independence, and the socialist orientation of the president of the time, Desiré Delano Bouterse, provoked, as in the case of the neighboring Republic of Guyana, a fear on the part of the Brazilian military government, It tried to keep Suriname away from the Cuban influence (and even Libya) with advantageous cooperation agreements, showing that both English and Dutch Guiana - freed from European tutelage - would have difficulties in assuming a leading role as small independent states, since they were and are in the shadow of more powerful countries like Venezuela and Brazil.

These late or ineffective independences (French Guiana) can be explained by the low demographic density, with diverse origins and without well-defined national identities, and enjoying financial aid from their former metropolises. This compromised the conditions for political emancipation of these countries, a fact that also marked the other European colonies in Asia and Africa from 1950s on.

Another relevant highlight from the geopolitical point of view is that sovereignties did not put an end to the model established in the colonial pact, as only the format changed, since vegetal and mineral exploration remains to this day captained by foreign companies, while the fractures established by the still latent border

⁴Commonwealth of Nations that was originally created as the British Commonwealth of Nations. It is an intergovernmental organization with 54 member and independent countries. All the constituent nations, except Mozambique and Rwanda, were part of the so-called British Empire during colonial expansion (<https://thecommonwealth.org/>).

⁵Most of the British islands became independent in the 1960-70s, while the Dutch and French islands remained under the tutelage of their metropolises.

disputes (Figure 4) sharpen regional turbulence on account of the mineral wealth existing on the continent and in the maritime zone, such as gold and oil, respectively (SILVA, 2017).

But after centuries of fragmentation, the inclusion of the Republic of Guyana and Suriname in the Amazon Cooperation Treaty (ACT), starting in 1978, and their plans for physical integration through road and waterway construction in recent years sound like an attempt to mend divisions inherited from European colonization for territories that share similar ecosystems and problems.

IV. CONCLUSION

The political space of the Guianas begins with the occupation of indigenous peoples. Various ethnolinguistic groups populated the entire region and created multiple semi-nomadic territorial relations with a certain degree of socio-spatial fragmentation due to the differentiated occupation between the coast and the interior. This configuration changed after the 15th century, with what is metaphorically called the meeting of two worlds, an allusion to the moment of contact between the European world and the American world. Since that century, all territorial changes in the Guiana region have had umbilical relations with what was happening in Europe until at least the second half of the 20th century.

The great navigations correspond to a moment in which the first cultural clashes between the worlds took place, in the European eagerness to find the El Dorado, which significantly affected the first territorial changes in the region. Thus, the international treaties played an important role in regulating the geopolitics established by the European powers, although some of these treaties were not respected by those who did not feel included in them. Of these treaties, Tordesillas and Madrid were the most relevant, from a macro-regional point of view, although other treaties, such as the treaty of Breda⁶, of Utrecht and Badajos ⁷ have fulfilled a geopolitical function relevant to specific areas of the Guianas.

Although the European explorations of the 16th and 17th centuries were fundamental for the territorial configurations of the European powers in the Guianas, in the 19th century the fundamental mark in the region corresponds to the first independences, with Venezuela in 1811 and Brazil in 1822, the result of a set of

⁶Breaking the monopoly of Spain in favor of Holland.

⁷ Defining the boundaries between French Guiana and Brazil, in 1801.

instabilities that occurred in Europe and that, as one of its consequences, weakened the colonial pact and promoted the formation of the first sovereignties in the Guianas.

The region was practically ordered politically and territorially by the end of the nineteenth century, and the borders between the nations involved in the Guianas were put into relief for the definitions of the extent of each nation. Although many borders have been formally established by international agreements, there are still latent disputes between them all, with the exception of Brazil, whose central interest is the mineral reserves that exist in these areas, both on the continent and on the maritime platform.

In the second half of the twentieth century, amidst an ideological climate that underpinned and was the engine of the Cold War, the last macro-scale territorial changes occurred in the Guianas region. French Guiana becomes an integral part of its metropolis in 1946, and the Republic of Guyana and Suriname are the last to become independent nations, in 1966 and 1975, respectively.

Although today they are politically independent nations, with the exception of the Franco-Guyanese case, the non-Iberian countries of the Guianas, in the image of the Caribbean world to which they also belong, still have many privileged relationships with their former metropolises, since many ties have not been lost, thus constituting a true interface between the Amazon, the Caribbean, and Europe; but generally turning their backs on the more inland Guianas (Venezuela and Brazil).

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