



## Article

# Roots of US-Brazilian Relations (1821-1913)

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**Abstract:** The research deals with the roots of the American-Brazilian relations during the period (1821-1913). The researcher sheds light on the course of those relations, through which the United States of America sought to secure its interests in Brazil and delegate the influence of other European colonial empires there, and what are the means, mechanisms and procedures that the United States of America followed within the framework of achieving those goals, which varied and progressed between recognizing Brazil's independence and supporting and backing the establishment of the republic and creating the Brazilian constitution, and directing its diplomatic and economic relations towards the path that ensures the promotion of the interests of the United States of America and its superiority over other major European powers.

**Keywords:** relations, Brazil, United States, independence

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## 1. Introduction

### First: Research background

Studying American relations with any Latin American country in general, and Brazil in particular, is integral to understanding the trends and questions that preoccupied American decision-makers before formulating any policy or principle, and its significance, purpose, feasibility, and priority. The Monroe Doctrine, implemented by the United States under President James Monroe in Latin America since 1823, is no exception. The shift in the balance of major colonial powers that occurred at that time prompted the United States to comprehensively review the situation in Latin America and adapt to it by developing an appropriate principle or policy that would achieve its goals and objectives. Therefore, it sought to recognize most of the independent countries in Latin America and establish diplomatic and economic relations with them. Brazil was at the forefront of these countries for several reasons, most notably economic progress, political stability, and the abundance of resources and investment opportunities in Brazil.

Therefore, the importance of this research lies and is evident in the roots of the American-Brazilian relations and their bilateral goal, which combined mutual diplomatic recognition and the erosion of the influence of the major European colonial powers at that time in Latin America on the one hand, and neutralization, confrontation, and even elimination of this influence there on the other hand, and the extent of its success in achieving these goals.

### Second: Research objectives

Relations between the United States and Brazil have always held a strategic dimension, given the importance of the two countries under study in terms of size and population density, as well as their influence on other countries in the region. Therefore, this research aims to shed light on these relations, which encompass all political, economic,

and military spheres, and the resulting impact on the stability and regional security of both countries.

## 2. Methodology

Accordingly, the research structure is divided into an introduction, body, and conclusions. The research sheds light on the roots of US-Brazilian relations (1821-1913), examining these relations through historical tracing and objective, logical analysis based on an induction of the positions and actions taken by the political leadership in both countries.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### Roots of US-Brazilian Relations (1821-1913)

The year 1821 witnessed the return of King João VI of Portugal to Lisbon and the passing of the rule of Brazil to his son, Pedro I [1], who soon declared Brazil an independent state and installed himself as its emperor on September 7, 1821 [2]. This reduced the possibility of any future attempt by Portugal to reoccupy it militarily [3]. The Portuguese king's refusal to recognize Brazil's independence was a reason for the kings of European countries to refrain from establishing official diplomatic relations with it, as this would mean breaking their ranks. However, this did not prevent Britain from playing the role of mediator between them. As is well known, Portugal and Britain were linked to each other politically and economically regarding Brazil. The mediation was entrusted to the powerful British Foreign Secretary, George Canning. However, the negotiations soon reached a dead end, as it was proven that Portugal's assertion of sovereignty, in contrast to Brazil's demand for independence, were two diametrically opposed decisions that could not be reconciled. Therefore, Canning sent Sir Charles Stewart, the British ambassador in Paris, on a special mission to Lisbon, to show the Portuguese that Britain found itself obliged by its own interests to recognize Brazil's independence, and that his government would begin negotiations with Brazil to this end. [4].

On the other hand, this matter was in the interest of the United States of America, as it was the first country to recognize the independence of Brazil in 1824. Brazil, in turn, was the first country to officially recognize the American Monroe Doctrine. Within the framework of diplomatic representation, the Brazilian government appointed Sir Jose Rebelo as its chargé d'affaires in Washington, who officially assumed his duties in April of the same year [5].

In the same context, the US government recognized Brazil's independence. The cabinet of President James Monroe witnessed a difference of opinion and a heated debate about the wisdom of recognition. Supporters of recognition justified it by saying that it encouraged the monarchy to establish a foothold in Latin America, a step towards liberating its countries. The United States, in particular, was more concerned with the reality of independence than with the form and system of government. However, since the United States had recognized many former Spanish colonies two years earlier, it did the same with Portugal in 1824 [6].

It seems that the United States of America was not concerned with the form of regime in the newly independent state, whether it was republican or imperial, as much as it was interested in exploiting the new situation in Brazil in the framework of winning it over to its side. The American administration at that time exploited Brazilian aspirations to obtain recognition of national independence, especially since it wanted to obtain recognition and acceptance of the Monroe Doctrine from Brazil, which was considered not only the largest country in Latin America, but also the most advanced and stable. As a result of all these considerations, it was natural for the United States of America to support Brazilian independence in the hope that this independence would be a good beginning for the arrival of its interests and investments in Brazil in the end, in addition to its desire to

weaken the European colonial powers that had influence in the Latin American region in general and Brazil in particular.

Just as Brazil's independence had positive effects, it also had negative repercussions. In early 1825, Uruguay sought to get rid of Portuguese control represented by Emperor Pedro I, and Argentina did the same when it tried to re-incorporate the Banda Oriental into the government of Buenos Aires, which had been independent since 1819. Therefore, a number of Uruguayan revolutionaries crossed the borders of Buenos Aires, raising the level of rebellion against the Brazilian government. However, the Brazilian army forces were able to defeat the Uruguayan rebels. Realizing their relative helplessness in the face of the Brazilian forces, the latter appealed to the government of Buenos Aires for assistance, and their request was granted, especially since Argentina had seen in this an opportunity to merge the Banda Oriental with Buenos Aires. Although Brazil was not prepared to wage war with Buenos Aires, they were also not prepared to lose Uruguay or the Banda. Therefore, Emperor Pedro did not hesitate to declare war against Argentina, mobilizing his navy to impose a blockade on Buenos Aires. Aires, this blockade that aroused the anger of the major European countries, especially Britain, which had trade and economic business with Buenos Aires, was severely damaged [7].

Based on the mediation role that the London government had long played, the latter was able to convince Brazil to lift its siege of Buenos Aires, in exchange for a pledge to seek recognition from the Lisbon government. Indeed, under pressure from the British government, which benefited from Brazil's prosperous markets, the Portuguese government agreed to recognize Brazil's independence, and this took place in August 1825 [8]. In the same context, Britain officially recognized Brazil's independence in January 1826. Other European countries, such as Austria, France, and Tsarist Russia, soon followed suit and also recognized Brazil's independence [9].

Following this, and in the context of regulating economic relations between Britain and Brazil, a system emerged to regulate foreign trade, through the conclusion of the British-Brazilian Commercial Treaty of 1827. This paved the way for agreements concluded by the Brazilian government with several major powers. Signed in 1828, these treaties were to be valid for a period of twelve years, after which they could be terminated by either party. What distinguished these commercial treaties was their inclusion of the most favored nation clause, which granted customs reductions on imported goods and also granted special legal privileges to foreign nationals. Domestically, these treaties were subject to domestic criticism, as they were considered political humiliation and economic dependence. However, the government justified these concessions by claiming that they were necessary to gain diplomatic recognition from the major powers [10].

It is clear that the Emperor of Brazil, Pedro I, and his entourage had a desire to ward off the dangers of the major colonial powers. Signing these treaties with these countries guaranteed their recognition of Brazil's independence. It can therefore be said that these treaties curbed the ambitions of these powers to invade his country in order to obtain its untapped resources and to obtain their assistance in extracting and developing these resources.

A controversial issue regarding the treaty arrangements with Britain was that Brazil had pledged to abolish the Atlantic slave trade as of 1830. However, it continued to import slaves from Africa, arguing that it was essential for national economic prosperity, thus ignoring its commitment to the treaty. Meanwhile, the United States proved to be a strong ally, once again resisting the British Navy's attempts to enforce its right of search policy, which included the detention of American ships, forcing Brazilian slave traders to use ships built and registered in the United States [11].

Internally, the situation in Brazil was turbulent, and Emperor Pedro's popularity had declined, especially after he signed the treaties. Furthermore, the state treasury was depleting, and federalist elements were emerging, calling for a republic. They were influenced by the French July Revolution of 1830 and the abdication of Charles X, as well

as by the influence of the press at this juncture. Popular discontent with the rule of Emperor Pedro I began to grow, and the pretext for the 1831 revolution was his dismissal of his cabinet on April 6 of the same year. This prompted a massive uproar that threatened to take on revolutionary dimensions unless the previous ministers were reinstated. This forced Emperor Pedro I to resign and return to Portugal, having bequeathed the rule of Brazil to his son, Pedro II, who was still a child of six. This led to the formation of a three-member regency council that would last until 1840, when he assumed his imperial powers [12].

With the accession of Pedro II to power, Brazil witnessed a great interest in culture and science. He brought in a large number of scientists and writers and sent many students on scientific missions to Europe. He also focused on various development projects in various economic sectors. On the other hand, during the reign of Emperor Pedro II, Brazil participated in two wars: the first against Argentina in 1852, and the second was the War of the Triple Alliance (1865-1870), in which Brazil joined Argentina and Uruguay to fight Paraguay. Meanwhile, the isolated and lacking international influence, the capital of the United States did not attract prominent Brazilian diplomats as did European capitals. Moreover, the US government was displeased with the Brazilian position during the American Civil War (1861-1865). It had been tolerant of the Confederacy, and Brazil precipitated a series of bitter conflicts with Washington by granting the South a military designation and the use of Brazilian ports. After the Civil War, the migration of some Confederate families to Brazil had the dual effect of disrupting relations between the two countries in some respects and improving them in others [13].

Nevertheless, the visit of Emperor Pedro II and his wife to the United States in 1876, on the occasion of the Centennial Exhibition, can be considered evidence of the growing affection between the two countries. The warm reception the royal couple received everywhere was a catalyst for the growing appreciation. The nature of the reception and the popularity of the visit are evidenced by the Emperor's election to the National Geographic Society and the inclusion of his biographical sketch in the institution's annual report, to the point that a book was later dedicated to his memory [14].

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, pressures began to mount for the establishment of a republican government. The decree issued by Pedro II on May 13, 1888[15], abolishing slavery and the slave trade, had a negative impact on landowners in particular and on the Brazilian economy in general. Many forces, led by the army and the parties existing under the empire [16], cooperated to overthrow the empire and succeeded in doing so without conflict and, to put it metaphorically, without bloodshed. On November 15, 1889, the fall of the empire and the establishment of a republic in Brazil were announced, headed by Marshal Manuel Deodoro de Fonseca [17],

Meanwhile, the above change in the system of government significantly altered the structure of the Brazilian government. The Republican Constitution of Brazil, promulgated on February 24, 1891, created a federal government that guaranteed autonomy to the old provinces, renamed states, and left only general matters affecting the nation as a whole to the federation. Brazil was officially renamed the "United States of Brazil." Its status motto was "Order and Progress," emblazoned on the beautiful new Brazilian flag in blue, green, and yellow. Under the 1891 Constitution, states raised money by taxing the export of goods to other states. This meant that the few states that produced a surplus of food—such as those in the south of the country—prospered, while others suffered terribly due to shortages. States in need of loans to finance improvements or debt payments had to negotiate individually with foreign banks and governments at high interest rates due to their lack of collateral, and poor states lacked the collateral to back up the borrowed funds [18].

The United States welcomed a new republican government in Brazil. Brazil had explicitly adopted the American Constitution of 1787 as its model and was quick to

recognize the new government. The provisional Brazilian government was grateful to the United States for being the first international power to do so. As a result, a period of close friendship began between the two countries. The government of the new Brazilian republic appointed Salvador de Mendonça as its consul to the United States. Mendonça devoted himself to improving relations between the two countries, recognizing the importance of the American market, and North America in particular, for Brazilian products. He sought to consolidate trade relations through a formal treaty. His efforts resulted in the signing of a reciprocity agreement, which entered into force in 1891, just one year after his promotion to minister. Under this agreement, Brazil's main exports—rubber, coffee, sugar, and hides—entered the expanding American market duty-free. American exports received similar privileges from Brazil [19].

From the above, it appears that the new Brazilian government, through these moves, was attempting to secure a new market for its products. On the other hand, it believed that rapprochement with the United States, a significant new international power, would protect it from other colonial powers.

During the first years of the Republic, the internal situation was turbulent - although its first two presidents were from the army, namely Marshal Manuel Deo Doro do Fonseca and Marshal Floriano Vieira Peixoto - because the stronger states with economic potential gradually began to control the central authority and the federal government during their reigns [20]. The result was the outbreak of a revolt by the leaders of the naval forces in the port of Rio de Janeiro in 1893, during which the rebels threatened the foundations of the young republic. However, the United States of America showed its solidarity and support for the republic, when the American naval forces played a role in helping the Brazilian government to suppress the revolt. The Brazilian government expressed its thanks, appreciation and great gratitude to the United States of America. As a result, and in the context of framing and strengthening bilateral relations between them, the Brazilian government, in the context of returning the favor of the United States of America, confiscated and banned the circulation of the book by the Brazilian writer Eduardo Paulo da Silva Prado (*The American Illusion*), which was first published in 1893, and in which he criticised the interference of the United States of America in the affairs of the countries of Latin America. In 1894, Brazil proceeded to erect a memorial to the American President James Monroe in Rio de Janeiro to commemorate him and his principle [21].

Following the suppression of the revolution, the armed forces relinquished power to the civilian president, Prudente José de Moraes Barros, in November 1894. This inauguration marked the beginning of political stability in the country and contributed to achieving economic prosperity, due to the increase in the country's industrial and agricultural capabilities [22].

In the context of strengthening bilateral relations between Brazil and the United States, February 1895 witnessed US President Stephen Grover Cleveland issuing his decision in favor of Brazil in the arbitration case referred to him regarding the disputed territorial territories between Argentina and Brazil. This decision contributed to strengthening friendly feelings towards the United States. Brazilians felt joy and happiness after the announcement of the above decision. The US arbitration in the Venezuelan Guiana crisis between Britain and Venezuela in 1895 also provided Brazil with the opportunity to express its gratitude to Cleveland and also confirm its support for the principle of referring territorial disputes to international arbitration in the same year, after the Brazilian Senate sent a congratulatory message to the US President for his policy that preserved the dignity and sovereignty of states in the region [23].

Feelings of gratitude and close friendship with the administration in Washington increased after Brazil suffered serious internal political difficulties that threatened its unity and led to the weakening and decline of its international standing. At the end of the naval revolution, a rebellion that threatened the survival of the republic again emerged, forming

in the remote lands of the Sertão state in the northeast. After two failed military campaigns in 1896, Brazil sent an overwhelming force equipped with artillery to crush the settlement in 1897 [24].

Subsequently, Brazil appeared unusual among Latin American countries in its open sympathy for the United States. During the Spanish-American War of 1898, [25] despite declaring a policy of neutrality, this did not prevent it from providing support and assistance to the American war effort during the war. It sold two warships it had placed under construction in British shipyards to the US Navy and allowed the ships and frigates to be refueled and refitted in Brazilian ports [26].

After 1910, the Brazilian economy was hit by severe crises due to overproduction and foreign competition, particularly in rubber cultivation and production. Although the Brazilian government launched an ambitious subsidy and aid scheme called Divisada Boração, the attempt to "value" rubber proved to be a disastrous failure and tarnished the reputation of Hermes Rodrigues da Fonseca's government. Despite these crises, the first years of his rule witnessed almost continuous progress in the country's economic development. Emigration was encouraged through government subsidies and other means, after the widespread outcry over labor shortages in 1911 and 1912. Emigration reached record numbers during Hermes's tenure, and approximately 4,828 km of railways were added to existing lines. In terms of the economic situation, the US state of New York became the largest market for rubber in the world in 1912, as nearly 60% of the rubber traded there was Brazilian. Similarly, the United States consumed more Brazilian cocoa than any other country. The result was that in the same year the United States bought 36% of Brazil's rubber and cocoa exports, while the second most important market, Britain, bought only 15% [27].

During the ten months ending October 1913, the United States imported \$76,500,000 worth of goods from Brazil. Its exports to Brazil amounted to only \$35,100,000, leaving the United States in debt to Brazil by \$41,400,000. Although there were two months in 1913 in which both imports and exports to and from Brazil were counted, this adverse balance was likely to be much lower for 1913 than for 1912. In 1912, the United States imported \$123,881,644 worth of goods from Brazil, while its exports to Brazil amounted to only \$341,100,000, leaving a adverse balance of \$89,203,563. The value of coffee exported from Brazil to the United States of America in 1913 amounted to about (53,548,469) dollars, and the United States of America's imports of coffee alone amounted to much more than the total imports of Brazil from Britain or Germany of the same material, as its imports from Britain for the same year amounted to about (48,871,369) dollars and from Germany (47,161,518) dollars. On the other hand, the United States of America sold to Brazil less than half of what Britain sold and much less than what it sold from Germany, and the goods to Britain amounted to (71,615,133) dollars, and to Germany (43,134,318) dollars [28].

#### **4. Conclusion**

This research reached a set of conclusions, including the following:

1-US-Brazilian relations were influenced by internal and external events and had a diplomatic, political, and economic dimension. They also had several common goals and interests, the most prominent of which were political recognition and diplomatic cooperation.

1. Eliminating European colonial powers from the region and the dangers posed by their presence in Latin America.
2. Economic interests and investments, which flourished after the improvement of US-Brazilian relations, have displaced other European powers and become Brazil's primary and most important economic partner.

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