

## Integration and International Security in the Guyana Shield: challenges and opportunities

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### Resumo

O presente trabalho se propõe a discutir o binômio integração/segurança internacional na região do Platô das Guianas, composto por cinco territórios: Brasil, Guiana Francesa (França), Suriname, Guiana e Venezuela. Abordaremos o binômio no Platô a partir de elementos recorrentes que compõem a constelação de segurança e a dinâmica de integração. Quais sejam: o fluxo migratório intraregional, com destaque aos grupos brasileiros presentes nos territórios da região; a extração de ouro e as atividades que compõem o garimpo (armas, drogas, comércio, prostituição), colocada como um problema de segurança em diferentes aspectos; os litígios fronteiriços não resolvidos desde o período colonial que, com exceção do Brasil, envolve todos os países do Platô das Guianas; a falta de interconectividade entre os territórios, colocando-os “de costas” para o subcontinente.

**Palavras-Chave:** Guiana, Platô das Guianas; Integração das Guianas.

### Resumen

Este estudio se propuso analizar el binomio integración/seguridad internacional de la región de las Guayanas, integrada por cinco países: Brasil, Guayana Francesa (Francia), Surinam, Guyana y Venezuela. Se discute el binomio en la Meseta de los elementos que conforman la constelación de la seguridad y la dinámica de la integración. A saber: la migración intrarregional, especialmente a los grupos brasileños presentes en la región; la extracción de oro y de las actividades que conforman la minería (armas, drogas, comercio, prostitución) colocado como un problema de seguridad en diferentes aspectos; disputas fronterizas sin resolver desde la época colonial, con la excepción de Brasil, involucra todos los países de las Guayanas; la falta de interconexión entre las regiones, de ponerlos "en la espalda" al subcontinente.

**Palabras clave:** Guyana; Meseta de Guyana; Integración de Guyana.

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## Introduction

The end of the Cold War appears as the main element of transformation in the international context that provided systemic changes and brought a new space for relations between states. In the wake of these changes, regionalism was strengthened and new attitudes regarding international cooperation allowed a new beginning for regional organizations, giving more credibility to its functions and to regional cooperation arrangements in general.

Another important change in international relations is that with the end of bipolarity in the organization of world relations, the international system was decentralized, which strengthened the regional discussion. Regional powers, less tied up by the balance of power of the Cold War, now have greater freedom to conduct their foreign policies and engage on issues within their regions (PRECIADO, 2008).

Generally, the process of regionalization is associated with economic issues as of integration and free trade agreements. However, the concept of regionalism in the past three decades has significantly expanded its scope, transcending the economy and comprising political, cultural and historical elements.

International security is another aspect of international relations which will also enhance the regionalization trend. The absence of systemic disputes as in the Cold War era and the probability of threats perpassing shorter distances rather than longer ones put the regionalized view about security as an important aspect of contemporary international security (BUZAN, 2007). Another important element of contemporary international security is the extension of the debate on its scope. According to the traditional comprehension, the concept of security is directly attached to the idea of confrontation between states. In this context, security is related to survival, thus forming a strictly political-military agenda, hallmark of the Cold War context. However, the theoretical debates that came to light from the 1970s brought an economic and environmental agenda for the discussion about security as well as issues concerning identity and transnational crimes.

South America, inserted into the trend of regionalization in international relations in the past decades, sought to strengthen this process in the subcontinent with integration initiatives. The region occupies 12% of the land area, has 25% of arable land, including abundant natural resources, and only 6% of the world's

population. In a context of world population growth, increased use of natural resources and systemic ecological concerns, the region shows great strategic importance.

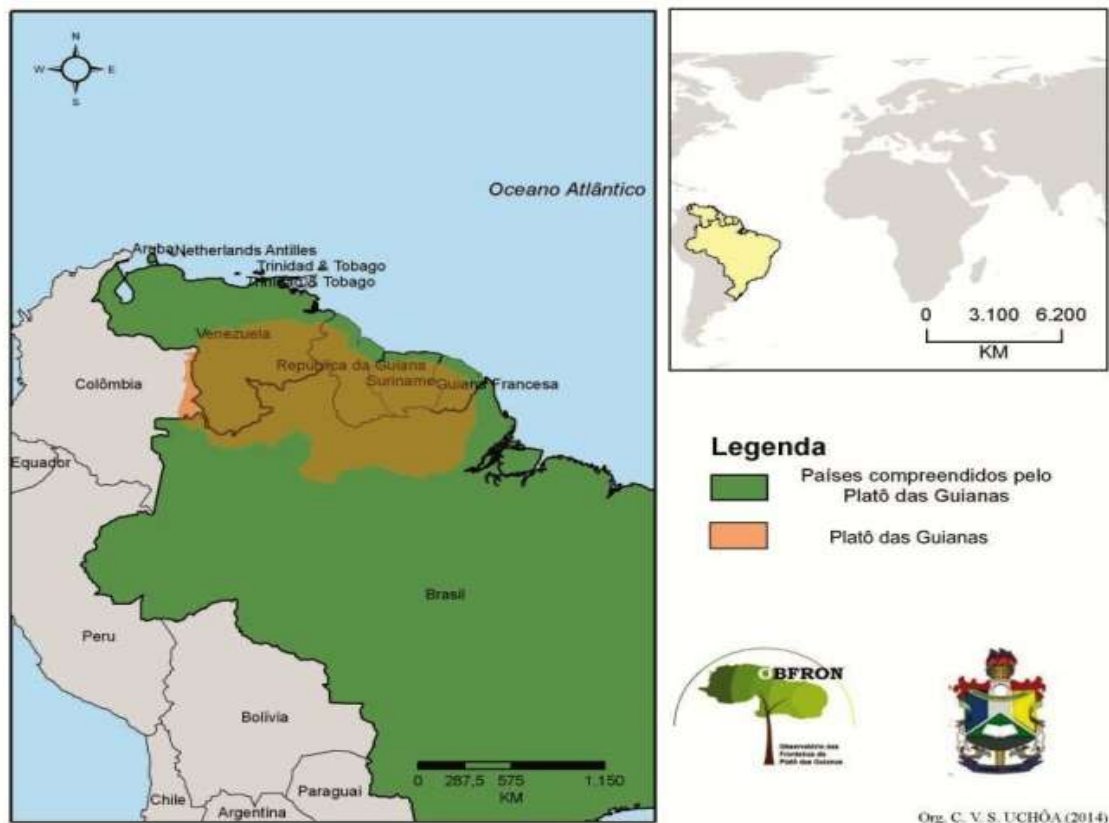
Amongst the sub-regions of South America (the Andes, the La Plata Basin and the Amazon Basin), the Amazon region stands out for its international vocation, as presented in nine out of the thirteen countries in South America<sup>i</sup> - and the development potential of the region. Further approximation of Amazonian countries presents some possibilities such as: to signify a new scale to think and act in transnational Amazon; to boost other regional initiatives (MERCOSUR, UNASUR, and CDS); and, ultimately, to strengthen the voice of South America (BECKER, 1992, 2005; AMAYO, 1993, 2007, 2009).

With an area that covers more than 50% of South America, the Amazon region involves nine countries and has axes with different dynamics regarding integration processes and security issues. Among these center lines we will focus this text on the region of the Guyana Shield.

### **Integration in the Guyana Shield**

The focused region comprises Brazil, French Guiana, Suriname, Guyana, Venezuela and a small part of Colombia (Map 1), which means more than half of the countries that make up the Transnational Amazon. Located north of the South American subcontinent, the Shield of Guyana is socioculturally characterized by an Amazon-Caribbean identity.

Map 1: Guyana Shield



Source: CORRÊA, 2014.

The process of regional integration among the Shield countries was characterized by a lack of strong action between states and, thereby, the interactions in this region were limited to regional immigration, to the economy orbiting mines - mostly illegal, and to drugs and loggers.

With the launch of the Initiative for the Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South-America (IIRSA) in 2000, changes were laid out concerning this reality since many projects between the countries of the subcontinent were designed and would give a greater physical, energy-wise and communication integration.

Comprising Integration and Development (EID) axes, IIRSA has one of those with direct influence on the Shield of Guyana: the axis of the Guiana Shield. This axis was defined by delimiting an area of influence that incorporates the connection of the main points of articulation between Brazil, Guyana, Suriname and Venezuela.

The Guiana Shield Hub covers the Eastern Region of Venezuela, the states of the North Region of Brazil and the entire territories of Guyana and Suriname. The *Revista de Geopolítica*, Natal, v. 7, nº 1, p. 43 - 67, jan./jun. 2016.

area influenced for the Guiana Shield Hub reaches an area of 4,002,555 km<sup>2</sup>, equivalent to 40.80% of the total area of countries that form the Integration and Development Axis. With an estimated population of about 25 million inhabitants, the concerned region has a GDP of about US\$ 199,904.2 million, concentrated in 99.1% between Brazil and Venezuela (IIRSA).

The region has a not yet explored potential regarding natural resources strategies such as: oil, gas, bauxite, gold and wood, fresh water reserves and potential for hydropower development. Industrial activities also occur through oil refining, aluminum production, iron ore processing and aviculture. However, the lack of interconnectivity in the Shield restricts the development of potential activities, and IIRSA projects are precisely concentrated in this sector. Nonetheless, despite the potential of exploration and the launch of IIRSA, integration in this region has had little change in recent decades. Most projects concerning the Guiana Shield Hub failed to materialize.

Out of the four working groups that make up the Guiana Shield Hub in IIRSA there are none directly lead by France in its South American department. However, there are projects of neighboring countries with French Guiana who have this territory within its area of influence and integrational initiatives financially supported by the European Economic Community and by the French state in French Guiana<sup>ii</sup>.

Among the projects involving French Guiana, the International Bridge over the Oiapoque River brings forth expectations throughout the regions of influence. The bridge aims to allow connectivity between Brazil, French Guiana, Suriname, Guyana and the Caribbean, allowing the establishment of a mesh of the Atlantic Pan American Highway and mainly a connection between Brazil and France, MERCOSUR and the European Union.

The effects of physical connection between French and Brazilian territories have multiple and complex results, as the bridge reverberates in different scales and themes. Silva points out some of these effects:

The international image of its construction is related to contemporary processes of reduction of geographical discontinuities to facilitate the flow in an environment of some interfaces between national states, in which the containment boundary, discriminant or protective against physical "invasions", weakens in view of globalizing economic processes. (...) In the sub-regional national scale, the binational bridge tends to generate a change in social relations, not only in the

border area, stemming from this new “connector” which is the bridge, but also the infrastructure network generally in the eastern Amazon. On the local scale, the binational bridge will cause a new dynamic in the relationship between the border towns, besides having promoted an urban and rural land appreciation and a redefinition of the urban sprawl of cities such as Oiapoque and Saint-Georges-de-l'Oyapock for areas near the technical object and rearrangements between local authorities so the characteristic problems of that border does not affect the dynamics designed for regional development and other transformations (SILVA, 2013, p.67).

Meanwhile, ready since 2011, the Binational Bridge did not go so far in operation and still today lends itself more as a monument that symbolizes the difficulties of integration between two regions distant of its power centers, Brasilia and Paris, which in turn, have not demonstrated the integration of their peripheries as a strategic platform, either priority.

In Suriname, the lack of interconnectivity is a major obstacle to its “continentalization” and it is precisely the focus of the country's integrational projects in the Guyana Shield. According to the data of IIRSA, the projects that Suriname participates are focused on transport. These projects have a strategic role to implement and to develop an integrational link at the northern tip of South America through the connection between Venezuela, Guyana and Suriname, to consolidate physical international connection in order to promote sustainable development, and the integration of Guyana, Suriname and the states of Pará and Amapá in Brazil<sup>iii</sup>.

The construction and improvement of Surinamese roads are of strong economic importance, for within its territory there are abundant mineral reserves. The exploration of these riches coveted by companies in countries such as China and Brazil depends on logistical issues as the Surinamese territory since it is covered by the Amazon forest and demographically busy only in its coastal plains. Land connections to the interior of the country would allow its occupation and its development.

Nevertheless, according to the IIRSA Consensus Implementation Agenda, 2005-2010 out of the projects in Suriname left the planning or pre-execution phase. It means that although the projects are in IIRSA scope since its creation and despite the strategic importance for a more effective integration of Suriname to its geographical surrounding areas, the isolation of the country remains a predominant feature.

The other projects within the Guiana Shield Hub IIRSA (Map 2), aims the integration between Brazilian states of Amazonas and Roraima with Guyana, consolidating infrastructure that links both countries. The projects seek the implementation and development of an integrational link in the far north of South America that connects Venezuela, Guyana and Suriname. Finally, these groups aim to consolidate an international physical connection between Guyana, Suriname and the Brazilian states of Amapá and Pará. However, out of the 15 projects that make up the 3 groups that are in Guiana, only the bridge over the Takutu River and roads from Linden to Georgetown are executed or running<sup>iv</sup>.

Map 2: Guiana Shield Hub IIRSA



Source: IIRSA, 2011.

The construction of the bridge over the Takutu River is part of a rapprochement between Brazil and Guyana developed at a slow pace since 1990. In 2003 the International Road Transport of Passengers and Cargo Agreement was signed during the meeting of the presidents Lula and Jagdeo. After a few years of interrupted works by irregularities, in 2009 the bridge was completed.

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The inauguration of the bridge was made with an abundant mention of the symbolic meaning of integration from Guyana to Brazil and South America (see LIMA, 2011). However, the connection between one of the poorest countries of the subcontinent with the state of the Brazilian federation in homonymous economic situation failed to increase dynamism in the regionalization process. Fears of a spread of transnational threats (illegal miners, drugs, and illegal logging) were present with the opening of the bridge (GEHRE& GOMES, 2013), but do not point to a stronger politicization of these issues.

According to IIRSA reports (2013), the projects with Venezuela and Suriname have had no great development in recent years and the reasons behind this may be the lack of priority of the countries involved or also disputes that Guyana has with its neighbors, theme of our next topic.

### **Security Dynamics in the Guyana Shield**

The security dynamic of the Guyana region has common elements in the composition of the security constellation in the region. Stands out: the migration dynamics and their impact; gold extraction in the region, and the activities that make up the mining and border disputes.

The intraregional migration dynamics presents a stream of Surinamese groups, Guyanese's, and, mainly, Brazilians. This last group is perceived in French Guiana as a migratory pressure and in Suriname in conflict with local interests to other populations, in both cases nurturing a threatening speech in the local societies.

In French Guiana the populational diversity is enhanced and this is the result of successive waves of migration. The composition of the population was mostly of Indians, Creoles, black brown, Asians and metropolitans (metro)<sup>v</sup> in the early 1960s and later the diversity was intensified with the arrival of Brazilian immigrants, Haitians, Guyanese and Surinamese. According to the *Institut National de la Statistique et des Études Économiques (INSEE)*, in 2009 immigrants represented 29.7% of the population of the French Department, which indicates the French region with the highest migration rates in the country.

The emigration of Brazilians towards the French colony started since the colonial times and throughout the twentieth century saw the most intense moments as in World War II (AROUCK, 2001). In the 1960s the Brazilian presence is most

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notable because of the need of manpower for the construction of the Kourou Space Center, and in the 1980s the Brazilian migration was due to the search for employment positions because of the economic crises. It is possible to notice, thus, that from the 60s a migratory flow more or less intense, but uninterrupted. In this process, illegal immigrants that are in the gold mines as miners add up to the services that structure this activity such as food, transportation, trade, and prostitution. This undergroundness makes the numbers very inaccurate<sup>vi</sup>.

In the migration flow of Brazilians to French Guiana, according to the French and Brazilian authorities, there is a large number of illegal immigrants, mainly bound for mining in the forest. Environmental damage, crime, threat to indigenous populations due to contamination of rivers and fish by mercury used in mining, tax evasion, malaria and HIV / AIDS are some of the points related to mining activities mainly conducted by Brazilians.

Silva points out that:

For the Brazilian Consulate in Cayenne, there are records of 6,752 legalized Brazilian immigrants in French Guiana. The Consul Ana Beltrame reported that there are likely to exist three illegal for each legalized (SILVA, 2013, p. 156).

This prediction of illegals would add 20 to 30 million people to the number of Brazilians in French Guiana which a percentage would be linked directly to illegal mining. In this context, the flow of legal Brazilians and especially illegals have become perceived as a migratory pressure and the response of the French government set up a number of measures such as: greater control of foreigners with implementational barriers within the territory, an extraordinary device and non-existent in metropolitan France; criminalization and fine to the ones who illegally employ<sup>vii</sup>; criminalization of those who help an illegal foreigner to enter and remain in French territory<sup>viii</sup>.

It is worth pointing out that the circulation ratio of people between states, i.e., the relationship between “us” and “them” is a significant variable to locate the rate of integration between these two or more political units (ADLER, E. & BARNETT, M. 1998). In the case of the relationship between Brazil and French Guiana, the legal entry of Brazilians in the French Department is only made through visas. As for the Guyanese circulation, those with a French passport, the mutual is not true.

In the wake of the relationship between French Guiana with the region based primarily through securitized activities, the French government sought, in addition to the above measures, to control the Brazilian migratory pressure through a number of initiatives for cooperation with Brazil such as: the cross-border movement Charter, the creation of the consular post in Saint-Georges-de-L'Oyapock, Migrant's House and the River Council (Oiapoque).

To the ambassador Ana Beltrame<sup>ix</sup> of the Brazilian Consulate in Cayenne, the Brazilian migration towards FG is seen as a kind of threat to employments for the French-Guianese's. Another point raised by the ambassador about the Brazilian community in FG relates to the difference in the birth rate between Brazilian family and French-Guianese family. "It's three times more", said the Ambassador, "It surpasses the current cap of the French Social Security. You will see that both husband and wife (French) work. Benefits for 1.6 French children. In the Brazilian family the woman does not work, when she works she does it as a cleaner in the marginal market, and it does not count for social security and they have 6 children. They pierce the cap of Social Security and generate a deficit".

When we ask if between nationalities that most immigrate to FG, Brazilian have a different representation regarding Surinamese or Haitians, the ambassador says yes, because "we are a very large neighbor with a very large population, they know that if a tenth of Brazil migrates here we would be greater than the French-Guianese population. It is scary because of the size of our population. The ability to physically occupy a space". However, Ana Beltrame does not think that migratory pressure influences the Franco-Brazilian relationship. To the ambassador, mining would be the first barrier in deepening integration between both territories. "Then far away, way after, immigration", said Ana Beltrame.

In Suriname, the gold extraction and Surinamese remittances from abroad are the main found sources of the country in terms of money. Immigration in the last 20 years, especially from Brazilians, was directly connected to mining and activities that structure it, such as food, transportation, trade, and prostitution. We point out this difference because immigration of Brazilians in French Guiana, previously addressed in this text, is only partially related to mining. Another part of those Brazilians who migrate towards FG are in search of the attractions of a European territory such as the euro, social benefits, and health.

The arrival of Brazilian miners takes place in the 1980s. It is precisely at the end of this decade that the pressure to end the mines exploration in the Brazilian Amazon becomes effective<sup>x</sup>. The creation of indigenous reserves and the “green wave” already present in the international arena start to strengthen in Brazil, seeking to eliminate the significant activities that cause environmental damage, such as mining. This meant that thousands of miners in Brazil, holders of an important know-how in gold mining in the Amazon forest, were able to continue their occupations in the Surinamese reserves.

The arrival of Brazilians at the Suriname mines represented a major transformation in gold extraction. This was not only due to the number of Brazilians who came from the northern borders of Brazil, but mainly because of the Brazilian way of mining, unknown to the *Maroons*. According to Oliveira the Brazilians knew hydraulic disassemble techniques on land, an extraction method unknown to the *Bushinengues*. This contributed to the loss of artisanal mining developed by the *Maroons* for a new rhythm brought by the actors of this new migratory front (OLIVEIRA, 2010,).

Suriname Justice Ministry data pointed to the existence of more than 8,000 illegal Brazilians in the country. However, there are existing estimates that work with the possibility of up to 20,000 illegal Brazilians in Suriname (JUBITHANA-FERNAND, 2009) or still 30 to 40 thousand Brazilians in Surinamese lands (OLIVEIRA& KANAI, 2011). These estimates, both smaller and larger, represent a significant percentage of Brazilians in the small Surinamese population concentrated in exploring the greater wealth of the country.

In this context, the Brazilian are connected directly to gold mining and its surrounding activities, which has a direct influence in interpersonal relationships. This association of ethnic groups with certain activities is traditional in Suriname and, therefore, Brazilians were associated in their pioneering and predominant activities (HOFS, 2006).

The study made by Oliveira (2012) in the news papers of Suriname Times of Surinam (TS) and De Ware Tijd (DWT) noticed the construction of the Brazilian immigrants image. The author finds that out nearly thousand subjects analyzed, at least one article in TS about Brazilians in Suriname every 2.74 days, while The DWT

published every 3.53 days. Of the total news that addressed Brazilians, 94.60% had a negative treatment.

The work of Höfs (2006) says that Brazilians are represented as a threat to ethnic balance and public attention turns to the Brazilian immigration especially when some limited events occur such as the public disorder.

Operations in order to stop illegal activities were performed by Suriname, The Clean Sweep. Although Brazilians are not the main target of the Clean Sweep operation, it hit them directly, thus strengthening the image of Brazilians related to lawlessness and crime in general. As highlighted by Oliveira (2012) the operation that has a “broom” as its symbol promoted the “cleaning” discourse, strengthening stereotypes and besides contributing to “label and impose negative images to Brazilians living in Suriname” (p. 466).

Another episode that spots the tensions between Surinamese and Brazilians, occurred in the town of Albina. In 2009 a bar fight evolved into a widespread conflict between Brazilians and Maroons. In the fight, a Brazilian killed a *Maroon* and a general retaliation of the *Maroon* group against the Brazilian community took place. The reports describe rapes, conflagration, beatings and murders against the Brazilians.

Ronnie Brunswijk, politician and businessman, is one of the main leaders of the Suriname *Bushinengues* and arises from the mentioned conflict of that region. In The *Maroon* leader says that in recent years the Brazilians killed many people and he believes that retaliation is a reaction to years of violence conducted by Brazilians against his community<sup>xi</sup>. To Brunswijk, the explanation of the rapes, common type of violence against Brazilian women, is the assumption that “the Brazilian women go there to be [*sic*] prostitutes. Maybe they [the *Maroons*] have the idea that they had the right to do that.” This statement is consistent with Höfs (2006) and Oliveira (2012) arguments regarding the image and speech about the Brazilian community in Suriname.

The episode can be considered as an isolated case, since it did not show repetitions of the same intensity. Meanwhile, it is part of a securitization scenario of Brazilians in Suriname. The *Maroons* are more and more constituted as actors present in the Surinamese political scene since the end of the civil war in 1990s. Their struggle for the right to own the lands that they occupy, regions with plenty of gold

mining stocks, has won unprecedented and support of supranational institutions. Gold mining is a fundamental part of the economy of the *Maroons* and Suriname in general and the exploration is basically done by Brazilians. Those, in turn, are the subject of a speech that connects to morally reprehensible illegal activities by the local society and the relationship with the *Maroons* have taken outlines of a threatening speech.

In Guyana, their ethnic background is also quite peculiar when compared to other countries in South America. Currently there are six ethnic groups that hardly mix up with each other, keeping a socio-economic-political division within the country. The Guyanese society is made up by African, European, Asian, Indian, Indigenous and Portuguese groups. Among these groups, Islamic and Hindus constitute the majority of the nation and they share power among themselves (LIMA, 2011, p.25).

This Guyanese ethnic background influences the domestic policy of the country and in its foreign policy as well. According to Vizentini (2010), “the elites are relatively permeable to mixed marriages, but in general each group maintains strong identity, with little miscegenation. Later, the formation of political parties and movements was strongly seated on ethnic lines”. Since its independence in 1966, the presidents of the country represented diversity by electing a Chinese head of state (1970-1980), two Afro-Guyanese (1980-1992), two Indians (1992-1997, 1999-2011), and a female white Jewish American (1997-1999). The representation of diversity in the choice of the heads of state is initially an interesting fact about the democratic point of view of the country. However, the paths indicated by the various presidents in the construction and development of the nation did not converged.

The formation of the Brazilian community in Guyana is not new. In the meantime, some factors contributed to an enhancement of migration dynamics between both countries. About the Guyanese flow to Brazil, among the elements which potentialized the migration, stand out: the pursuit of public health services; search of jobs in civil and domestic construction; parental relationship networks. In the opposite direction of the flow, i.e., of Brazilians in Guyana, the boosting elements are: the aforementioned substantial decrease of mines in the Brazilian Amazon in the 1980s; the construction of the bridge over the Takuto River, part of the IIRSA projects.

The presence of Guyanese in Brazil is outstanding in the state of Roraima, which received many Guyanese between the decades of 1960-1990 due to political and economic crises of Guyana. Specifying the number of Guyanese in Brazil appears to be a difficult task not only because of the amount of illegals, but also because of the double records that Guyanese's have.

According to Procópio (2007) there are approximately 12,000 Guyanese with both Brazilian and Guyanese citizenships living in Roraima. Among the reasons for this double record is the fact that many Guyanese have a wide network of kinship, as well as the socio-cultural processes that develop between the Macushi and Wapichana ethnic groups living on the border between both countries. This population encounter is called by Rodrigues (2009) as part of the "Guyana Place" which was built from very different population encounters and it remains as a place of great complexity inhabited by indigenous populations of different ethnic groups, regional migrants, and immigrants of all continents (p.223).

The Brazilian community represents, according to the census data of 2002, the third largest foreign community in Guyana, only behind the Venezuelans and Surinameses. The work of Hisakhana Corbin (2009) identifies different groups of Brazilian migrants in Guyana, where two features stand out: the concentration of work activities performed by Brazilians related to mining and the fact that Brazilians are seasonal workers. The concentration in mining directly affects the interests of the Amerindians who are struggling to establish their rights over their lands.

The seasonality of Brazilians, in turn, does not develop the interest of this group in settling, learning the official language and becoming part of the country's culture (LIMA, 2011). This means low intensity in terms of local integration for the group and the expansion of building space of an image of Brazilians as a group that only brings forth tension in the mines and the ills that surround this activity - as also observed in Suriname and French Guiana. We emphasize, though, that our study found no evidence of politicization, neither securitization of Brazilians within Guyana. Although, it is made clear that the extraction of gold and the performance of activities that support the mining (weapons, drugs, trade, prostitution), performed mostly by Brazilian miners, is presented as a security issue in different aspects and intensities in the region.

In the French Overseas Department, the tensions related to mining are not restricted to the French government, because as a European Amazonian space, the protection of French Guiana (FG) on environmental issues is connected to the European Constitution. The creation of a national park in the Department is a direct consequence of environmental protection and territorial claim of a coveted space for its auriferous resources (PIANTONI, 2011).

The French action against illegal mining led to the Operation Harpia. Composed by French policemen and militaries, the operation, since 2008, makes constant incursions in the mining areas. Hundreds of actions resulted in the arrest of more than 1,500 illegal immigrants and they had two French militaries killed by miners<sup>xii</sup>. According to Laurent Pichon, coordinator of the French police (Gendarmerie), “For the French of French Guiana the biggest challenge of the border between both countries is the fight against illegal mining<sup>xiii</sup>”.

The battle against illegal mining generated bilateral efforts between Brazil and France in the signing of agreements. They are: Agreement on Mineral Exploration, which seeks to organize institutionally the mineral exploration; Franco-Brazilian agreement against illegal mining.

The recent agreements are representative in the rapprochement between France and Brazil in the region, but did not yet bring great effectiveness in battling against illegal mining. The mining theme is constant when it comes to the relationship of the FG with the countries in their geographic surrounding. The predominance of Brazilians in this activity establishes the mining as the main barrier in approaching Brazil and the French department.

Finally, we highlight the border disputes of the Guyana Shield that involves all countries except Brazil. Border disputes are part of the classic issues concerning security and securitization. Considering that it is territorial sovereignty, the securitized player is normally the state and the predominant sectors are political and military. Since the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, the demand for boundaries originated many wars of high intensity.

### **Security dynamics in the Guyana Shield and its borders**

Nowadays in South America some territorial demands make up the security scenario that, in the recent past, was source of armed conflicts between Amazonian

countries<sup>xiv</sup>. Currently, there is no imminent outbreak of any military conflict for resolving border issues. However, a process of cohesive integration or the construction of a security community are facing the challenge of fundamental resolutions for relations between the states of the region as border issues.

Suriname has the most extensive border disputes in the region with France and Guyana, both inherited from the colonial period and dormant until the discovery of wealth in these regions. With French Guiana litigation refers to a territory on the southern border of Suriname with the French department. The dispute with Guyana, in turn, is twofold: the first one refers to the jurisdiction on the river that borders between both countries, the Corentyne River; the second is related to the New River Triangle region, located on the southern border of both countries near to Brazil.

The dispute with French Guiana dates back to the 1860s and refers to the origin of the Maroni River. Suriname maintains that its origin is the Lawa River and the French, the Tapahony River. Until the discovery of gold in the last decades of the nineteenth century, the determination of the Franco-Dutch Commission, which favored the French, was not questioned. After that discovery other arbitrations were made, but no agreement was consolidated. This situation follows still undefined.

Despite the approach of Suriname and France through cooperation agreements, Suriname continues with the Dutch thesis about the borders. The Surinamese maps show the disputed border, but the issue is not addressed in a significant way since the early 1990s. Some reasons make it earn no more reverberation in Suriname: Surinameses make up the second largest population of foreigners in French Guiana, which is an important part of the Surinamese economy with their remittances to the country; cooperation projects with France (*Agence Française de Développement*, 2008) are bulky and the possibilities of strengthening relations with the European neighbor are attractive for the limited Surinamese economy.

Border issues with Guyana refer to the sovereignty of the regions: Courantyne River, which separates them; the New River Triangle, which is the southernmost part of the countries in an area of approximately 15,000 square kilometers of Amazon Forest and it is equivalent to about 10% of the Surinamese territory; part of the Caribbean Sea that extends north of their coastlines and in 2007 had the judgment given by the International Court of Law of the Sea.



As in litigation with French Guiana, these disputes were asleep until the discovery of auriferous reserves in the concerned regions and even to the possibility of oil exploration. After many decades of trading in dispute with Guyana, countries have not come to an agreement and the need for an international arbitration proved to be the only way out.

The maritime dispute between Guyana and Suriname have, in their recent past, some moments of tension that resulted in an international arbitration resource. In 1978 Surinamese boats were arrested by navy boats of Guyana, which caused both countries to work on an agreement that led to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding in 1991. In the memorandum the countries pledged to allow the joint exploration of oil over the sea areas in claimed disputes.

However, the Surinamese Parliament never ratified the memorandum and oil multinational companies began exploring the area under concession of Guyana. In 2000 the situation became even tenser when the Surinamese navy boats employed hostile acts against a Canadian based platform Petroleum Company (CGX Resources Inc.), alleging that the company was in an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of the country.

The incident led to a series of border discussions between the two countries and the expectation of Guyana was that the memorandum would be respected. Then, it was proposed for both countries to share the award gains in the overlap area. The government of Suriname did not accept and demanded the withdrawal of the CGX license. After the intermediate attempt by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), which has little experience in that field, the topic was addressed to the International Court of Law of the Sea, as Suriname and Guyana are signatories to the Convention on Maritime Law (HOYLE, 2001).

In the legal sentence rendered by the court, the three decided themes were: i) that the Arbitral Court has jurisdiction to decide on maritime borders, illegal use of force and on the statements in articles 74 and 83 of Montego Bay; ii) that the cartographic boundaries have been stipulated, based on the principle of equidistance and that the armed action of Suriname – related to CGX – was recognized as a threat, according to the Charter of the United Nations, but the request made by Guyana was rejected in compensation; iii) that both countries violated Articles 74 and 83 of Montego Bay (p. 165-166).

For the Government of Suriname the sentence presents miscalculations and to Harvey Naarendorp, Foreign Minister of Suriname, it was not fair and equitable, since for Guyana 65% was granted out of 31,600 square kilometers from the width of the old disputed area, while Suriname received the remaining 35% (CAIRO, 2007). In the meantime, there were no other demands on Suriname's behalf, leaving the topic as arbitrated by the Court.

In a scenario on which Suriname is pressed between two territorial disputes, the possibility of a conflict with France is something distant, among other reasons, by the asymmetrical forces and the relationship between Suriname and French Guiana, where approximately 10% of Surinamese population is responsible for important remittances to the country. With Guyana, in turn, recent episodes of tension were interpreted as a threat by the Guyanese government and taken to the International Court of Law of the Sea, without the participation of other South American players and the possibility of oil exploration in the region accentuates the tension between Guyana and Suriname. A little fertile scenario for a cohesive process of regionalization that affects not only Guyana's Shield, but also more robust architectures for integration in the subcontinent.

The territorial dispute between Guyana and Venezuela is a legacy of colonial times, as in the case of other disputes in Guyana's Shield already mentioned in this article. The Venezuelan claim regarding the Essequibo region, corresponding to two thirds of the Guyana territory, crossed centuries and is still present in the relations between both states.

The region in query is characterized for containing over its tropical savanna Amazonian soil, rich in mineral resources (gold, bauxite, and uranium), other natural resources (forest products), and water resources with hydroelectric potential. Near by the rich Venezuelan region of delta of Orinoco, the territorial sea of the disputed area is rich in oil (DESIDERÁ, 2012).

In the dispute history, we can highlight that the agreement between Venezuela and Guyana, still British colony, made in 1899, began to be challenged by the Venezuelan government since the second half of the twentieth century. In 1962, Caracas began to make more strenuous efforts to resolve the Essequibo dispute. Great Britain agreed, in November, to hold the tripartite negotiations, including representatives of British Guiana, which would review the record of the arbitration of

1899. After some ministerial conferences, both parts agreed to procedures on which the claims in conflict could be permanently resolved.

After complications during the 1960s caused by occupations and claims of Venezuela, the tripartite committee that had been negotiating the territorial dispute declared to be unable to bring forth a solution. Both governments began the bilateral talks in 1970, year on which leaders of both countries signed the *Port-of-Spain* Protocol. Under the terms of this Protocol, Caracas agreed to suspend its territorial claims to twelve years. Both nations established diplomatic relations and continued their conversations. However, at the end of the 1970s the possibility of building a hydroelectric in the region from the border of Mazaruni River suffered contestation from Venezuela.

Despite the tension between both countries not leading to an armed conflict, the episode evidenced that when it came to the exploration of the riches of the region in contestation, the securitization movement was intensified. An event very similar to the episode between Guyana and Suriname related to the CGX platform.

In the 1990s the border issue had no higher demands or news, but in the following decade, on March 13, 2006, the President Hugo Chavez announced some changes in the national flag, which included the addition of an eighth star to honor the Province of Guyana in the struggle of the Venezuelan independence - episode that showed no major impact on the discussion of the disputed area. However, two recent events point to the potential for securitization between both states: in 2007 Venezuelan soldiers, backed by helicopters, used explosives to destroy two gold mining dredgers in Rio Cuyuni located near the border. The vessels were destroyed because according to the Venezuelan authorities they were on the Venezuelan<sup>xv</sup> side; in 2013 the Venezuelan Navy detained a ship operated by an oil company of the United States that sailed in the disputed region. Both countries claimed that the vessel which carried out seismic studies was in their territories<sup>xvi</sup>.

These episodes were treated as isolated events and were not linked to the Venezuelan claim of the Essequibo region. In neither cases there were major military movements and the bilateral diplomacy addressed the problems. However, the strain history in the region since the late 1970s had the exploration of natural resources (water, gold-bearing and oil) as the starting point of extraordinary actions, securitizing the dispute.

The area of influence of many integration projects that make up the Guiana Shield Hub is in the disputed region, and most projects failed to materialize since its creation in 2000. Even without official statements that connect the dispute with the low process of regionalization and implementation of integration projects between Guyana and Venezuela, we understand that the history points to this association. The dispute with Venezuela is an important variable in the formulation of domestic and foreign policy of Guyana and influences the dynamic of integration and security of the region.

Since the rising of Hugo Chavez to power in 1999, Venezuela is seeking to build a leading role in the region. This role is marked by an ability to influence joint initiatives of regional integration and seeks to build an anti-hegemonic ideological axis. This outline brought a negative agenda of diplomatic conflicts, political distancing and tensions with neighbors in the region.

This agenda did not affect Brazil directly, on the contrary, it ceased to build a scenario of economic and political approach between both countries. However, the expansion of influence, leadership and power space in the region moves the balance of power, which may cause disputes between the two countries. Thus, Brazil's position towards the border dispute between Venezuela and Guyana becomes an important variable in the dynamics of integration and security in this zone.

Meantime, the Brazilian official diplomatic position remained in the traditional non-interference and sought not to influence any move to settle the dispute with Venezuela. Regional organizations such as the Treaty of Amazonian Cooperation Organization and the Union of South American Nations neither registered the involvement in resolving the dispute, an observed absence in other cases discussed here.

The disputes that compress Guyana with their seemingly frozen neighbors, regarding its resolution, also freeze the possibilities of developing national and regional projects in the region. A securitization process on the territorial disputes would affect, beyond the directly involved countries, Brazil. Brazil's silence as well as the regional organizations demonstrates their lack of political power and willingness of key players in the dynamics of integration and security in South America.

## Conclusion

The lack of interconnectivity between the territories that make up Guyana's Shield is a striking element, and the little progress of IIRSA projects failed, since its creation in 2000, to change this reality. The region continues "on its back" to the subcontinent, deprived of other integration processes in South America.

Brazil, enjoying the position of a regional power, had in the past two decades South America as part of its international strategic focus. However, the country's role in the Guyana Shield was a relationship with "another South America" which, despite some timid approach initiatives with the region, did not enter as a priority in the Brazilian foreign policy agenda and even by representing a natural and desired way to the Caribbean, Brazil's role in the Shield as a state was marked by absence.

The Brazilian presence is presented in the dynamics of the Shield of integration and security not by projects and initiatives, but by migration, extraction of gold in the mines, illegal trade in arms, drugs and prostitution, once these activities are led by Brazilians.

The migration flow of Surinameses, Guyanese, and mainly Brazilians, generates pressure primarily in French Guiana, and Suriname presents itself in conflict with local interests of other populations, nurturing a threatening speech in local societies. This flow is mostly connected to gold mining in the region and the activities that make up the mining presents itself as a security problem in different aspects in French Guiana, Suriname and Guyana.

Added to the dynamics of regional security, the border disputes unresolved since the colonial period, with the exception of Brazil, involves all countries of the Guyana Shield. Even without presenting an imminent armed conflict, disputes hinder a cohesive integration and "freeze" the development and creation of projects in the region.

Given this scenario, Guyana's Shield appears as a challenge in building South America as a geopolitical region provided with a minimum unit and institutional framework based on common principles and macro objectives in international relations. The approach of the Caribbean Amazon with the rest of the countries of the region is a key factor in the integration of the subcontinent. A "South-Americanization" of the Guyana Shield, approaching the region with the subcontinent, currently with an interaction marked by the illegals and by the border

disputes, will be a key element in the effective establishment of a South America that, in addition to the coexistence and cooperation, may arise as an integrated region.

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<sup>i</sup> Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Suriname, Venezuela and French Guiana (Overseas Department of France).

<sup>ii</sup> Among these projects financed by France, we point out the PO, the Amazonie and INTERG. The first is the result of a collaborative work led by French Guiana authorities and partner countries (Suriname and Brazilian states such as Pará, Amapá and Amazonas). The second provides funding for interregional cooperation across Europe, which includes French Guiana. It is implemented under the European Community's territorial cooperation objective and is financed through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

<sup>iii</sup> Source: [http://www.iirsa.org/admin\\_iirsa\\_web/Uploads/Documents/lb13\\_completo\\_alta.pdf](http://www.iirsa.org/admin_iirsa_web/Uploads/Documents/lb13_completo_alta.pdf)

<sup>iv</sup> Source: IIRSA, **Cartera de Proyetos 2013**. (2013, November 09). Retrieved from:

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<sup>v</sup> Population derived from the French central territory.

<sup>vi</sup> See BALDWIN (2010).



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<sup>vii</sup> Art. L8251-1 and L8256-2 of the French Labour Code.

<sup>viii</sup> Art. L622-1 of CESEDA, *Code de l'Entrée ET Du Séjour des Étrangers Et du Droit d'Asile*.

<sup>ix</sup> See CORREA (2014).

<sup>x</sup> Extinction of the Registration regime and establishment of the Lavra Garimpeira regime (Law No. 7.805, July 18, 1989, that alters the previous decree – Decree-Law No. 227, February 28, 1967)

<sup>xi</sup> São Paulo, Tuesday, January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2010. INTERVIEW - RONNIE BRUNSWIJK. Retrieved from: <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/mundo/ft0501201008.htm>

<sup>xii</sup> Source: <http://www.defense.gouv.fr/operations/france/harpie>

<sup>xiii</sup> See SANTIAGO (2013).

<sup>xiv</sup> Peru and Ecuador in 1981 and 1995 engaged into armed conflicts regarding border issues in the Amazon region.

<sup>xv</sup> Source: <http://www.estadao.com.br/noticias/impreso,guiana-acusa-venezuela-de-invadir-zona-de-garimpo-em-seu-territorio,81568,0.htm>

<sup>xvi</sup> Source: <http://exame.abril.com.br/mundo/noticias/venezuela-e-guiana-vao-se-reunir-sobre-navio-detido>