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**The Peculiarity of Brazilian State-Formation in Geopolitical Context:
The Challenge of Eurocentrism in International Relations and Political
Marxism**

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Thesis submitted for the fulfilment of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
International Relations

University of Sussex

September 2017

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature:

Acknowledgements

This thesis was written with the financial support from CNPq – Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico – Brazil. I would like to thank all the academic and administrative staff within the Ministries of Science and Technology, and of Education (including in the public universities) who guided me through its bureaucratic maze, and who are enduring through the disastrous budget cuts imposed by current austerity policies.

I am deeply indebted to both my supervisors – Benno Teschke and Ben Selwyn – for all their support and advice during my years at Sussex. Our supervision meetings were always moments of solace amidst my doctoral tensions, and our discussions were essential to keep me focused. With professionalism and friendliness, they made me acquainted with some of the most vibrant debates in the field, while steering me away from many theoretical pitfalls. Most importantly, the scepticism towards neoliberal managerialism at large and in the academic world in particular helped me keep in mind why, in the end, we are all doing this. Their dedication to critical engagement improved this thesis, refined my argument, and enriched my thinking in countless forms, occasions, and topics. I feel honoured for having worked with both of them.

The same for many other members of the International Relations department at the University of Sussex. Through CAIT, CGPE, the reading groups for PM and UCD, through our teaching, and many other occasions, many colleagues have inspired, instigated, and motivated me through these years. Special thanks are owed to Earl Gammon, Julian Germann, Beate Jahn, Sam Knafo, Kamran Matin, Akanksha Mehta, Louiza Odysseos, Stefanie Ortmann, Patricia Owens, Justin Rosenberg, Cynthia Weber and Rorden Wilkinson. I also thank the opportunity to have discussed aspects of this research with scholars from other institutions, such as Alex Anievas, Tarak Barkawi, Vanessa Berner, Can Cemgil, Andrew Davenport, Clemens Hoffmann, Kerem Nisancioglu, Maia Pal, Maurício Santoro.

This thesis would not be possible without the brilliant community at (and around) Sussex, who have contributed in countless forms, including proofreading, philosophical debates, political support, coffee, and cake. Andrea Brock, Beatrice Chateaufort-Gagnon, Gabrielle Daoust and Stephen Roberts have accompanied me through this entire journey, which they have certainly made easier and more enjoyable. Thanks are also due to Sam Appleton, Darius A’Zami, Mareike Beck, William Crane,

Neil Dooley, Sahil Dutta, Anna Gumucio Ramberg, Anne-Sophie Jung, Richard Lane, Chris Long, Tom Martin, Thomas Patriota, William da Rosa, Maziar Samiee, Betty Schulz, Nancy Turgeon, Yavuz Tuyloglu, Aaron Vinnick, Daniel Watson, Morgan Williams, Steffan Wyn-Jones, Javier Zacaes and many others. I am particularly indebted to Felipe Antunes de Oliveira, for the countless hours of politics, history, philosophy, football, and music.

A great number of friends, both near and far, were essential in helping me establish in Brighton a home away from home. Among those, Laís Aló, Alan Alves, Tomás Andrews, Rafael Blanco, Rafael Campos, Renata Delício, Leandro Falcão, Ana Luiza Garcez, Renato Gomes, Eduardo Graciano, Isabela Lima, Bernardo Marcondes, Thiago Marcondes, Clara Marshall, Bárbara Moura, Fernanda de Paulos, Patrícia Peret, Lucas Pessoa, Yuri Piffer, Marcelo Pimentel, Bia Ratton, Rodrigo Reduzino, Taissa Rodrigues, Leo Sasaki, and Ronan Teixeira provided a combination of valuable discussion, proofreading, and unwavering support.

I also thank my family for everything they did to take me to this point. I owe everything I do to my parents, Wilson Salgado Junior and Ana Cristina Borges de Carvalho Dutra Salgado. My siblings, Thales, Beatriz, Fernanda and Felipe, inspired and motivated me a lot more than they are aware of. Special thanks go to my grandfather, Wilson Salgado.

I also thank Joana Midena Perrone, for all the support and patience, as well as for everything I could learn from her.

I dedicate this thesis to my brother, Thales José Dutra Salgado.

Thank you all,

Pedro Lucas Dutra Salgado

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List of Abbreviations

ES	English School
GPE	Global Political Economy
IHS	International Historical Sociology
IR	International Relations
PM	Political Marxism
UCD	Uneven and Combined Development
U.S.	United States of America
WST	World-Systems Theory

Summary

This thesis provides a historical reconstruction of the long-term trajectory of Brazilian state-formation (ca. 1450 - 1889), developed as a contribution to the sub-field of IR Historical Sociology. Theoretically, it is informed by the tradition of Geopolitical Marxism, which emphasises the social conflicts – on both sides of the Atlantic – that inform the geopolitical strategies and disputes between coloniser and colonised, without being determined by them. This account challenges existing theories of IR and Historical Sociology, in which trajectories of state formation are explained through the use of generalising theoretical assumptions foreclosing case-specific particularities, especially in non-European cases. I propose instead a radical historicist approach to social science, reframing social theory as a methodological guideline for historical analysis. Empirically, this amounts to a reinterpretation of Portuguese maritime expansionism, deriving the geopolitics of South American occupation not from generalising notions of colonialism or the expansion of capitalism, but from the situated practices of elite and inter-elite reproduction. The thesis moves on to show how the events that followed Napoleon’s invasion of Portugal in 1807 eventually led to Brazilian independence through an analysis of the competing interests of Portuguese and Brazilian elites, exacerbated by and geopolitically managed through the interference of British strategies of informal imperialism in Latin America. After formal independence, Brazilian policy making is driven not by the aspiration towards a civilizational standard or capitalist modernisation, but by the conflicts between segments of the ruling class, especially regarding the long-delayed transition from slavery towards other forms of labour control. The argument is that the historicist method does not only provide the key to the “peculiarity” of the Brazilian case by questioning the biases towards state-centrism in mainstream IR and towards structuralism in Marxism, but that it also overcomes the challenge of Eurocentrism by incorporating the agency of non-European subjects in the making of their own history.

“Soy
Soy lo que dejaron
Soy todas las sobras de lo que te robaron”
[I am
I am what they left
I am all the leftovers of what was stolen from you]
Calle 13 – Latinoamérica

“I’ll take you to a place
Where we can find our
Roots, bloody roots”
Sepultura – Roots, Bloody Roots

“O que não tem decencia nem nunca terá
O que não tem censura nem nunca terá
O que não faz sentido”
[What has no decency and never will
What has no censorship and never will
What makes no sense]
Chico Buarque and Milton Nascimento – O que será

Introduction

The existing theories in the field of International Historical Sociology (IHS) in the discipline of International Relations (IR) fail to account for the historical specificity of Brazilian state-formation. The mechanisms provided by them to explain the rise of the states-system and modern sovereign statehood are premised on a range of theoretical assumptions that deviate from the historical processes through which the institutions of territorial political authority are constructed in Brazil. Their accounts either bring assumptions about the Brazilian historical experience that fall outside the prevalent narratives presented in Brazilian historiographical literature, or portray such experience in a selective manner in order to fit their broader structural framework. They relegate historical specificity to the background of the analysis, privileging overarching narratives and general models in the explanation of how certain outcomes are produced. As a result, the challenge of Eurocentrism remains alive in IR/IHS. When explaining a historical process in a non-European case, the narratives that result from these theories are driven not by the specificity of that historical conjuncture, but by general theoretical explanations that often assume an European perspective. Non-European processes are explained through the application of theoretical assumptions, rather than through an analysis of the specific struggles that shaped them. Historical specificity is brought in as a confirmation of the general model when possible, or regarded as “deviations” or “exceptions” when not.

As an alternative, this thesis offers a historical reconstruction of the long-term Brazilian trajectory towards sovereign statehood, in order to highlight the specificity of the cumulative social and geopolitical processes that shaped its institutional consolidation. Such a narrative traces the historical context of such process back to the colonial period, tracing the origins of Portuguese colonialism in the 15th century, and following the geopolitical struggles that marked the historical evolution of Portuguese colonial practices, such as the rise of British influence in Portugal from the 18th century onwards. It then moves on to a study of the social disputes in which formal independence was obtained from Portugal through the creation of a new Braganza monarchy in South America. This transition towards sovereignty is not explained through a general process of expansion of an European international society or as a reformulation of the world-system’s structure. Instead, it is framed as an outcome of the geopolitical disputes between Brazilian landowners, Portuguese aristocrats, and

British informal empire. Finally, this study points to a process of differentiation within the Brazilian landowners as the main drive for the social and geopolitical transformations that Brazil went through during the second half of the 19th century, culminating with the abolition of slavery in 1888, and the transition towards the Republic that extinguished the rule of the House of Braganza in 1889.

This reconstruction is based on an analysis of Brazilian historiographical literature, emphasising the strategies employed by actors in the social and geopolitical disputes in which they are engaged. This constitutes a historicist reading of the Brazilian process of state-formation, to the extent that the explanation provided in the analysis is not logically deduced from a structural framework, nor given by a pre-existing theoretical model. Instead, it is found in the way actors responded to the pressures they encountered in the historical context in which they existed. Such an approach emphasises the open-ended character of social and geopolitical disputes, and privileges the innovations brought by agents in class struggle, analysing processes of social differentiation as products of innovative responses to the experiences of exploitation and competition. The adoption of this historicist account does not imply a rejection of theory, but requires a reinterpretation of its role. Rather than providing a general explanation to the production of certain kinds of historical outcomes, theory is conceived here as a method of historical investigation through which the object of study is analysed.

The theory employed to inform this historicist analysis is derived from the Political Marxist (PM) tradition. Since its origins on Robert Brenner's contribution to the transition debate (Brenner, 1977, 1985a, 1985b), PM has seen its share of controversies (Anievas and Nisancioglu, 2014; Blaut, 1994) and contributions (Lacher, 2003, 2006, Post, 2011, 2014, Teschke, 2005, 2009, 2014, Wood, 1995, 2002a), resulting in a few distinct formulations of its core tenets. Therefore, the application of PM as an anti-Eurocentric historicist method for social analysis is by no means a straightforward task. Instead, it requires a return to its roots and the identification of the tensions between structuralism and historicism within Marxism in general, and within PM in particular. Such a study consolidates the roots of historicism in a reading of Marx and PM that is centred around the open-ended character of class struggle, emphasising the historical agency of classes in developing their practices of reproduction through their experiences of exploitation and competition. In essence, it constitutes a different emphasis on Marx's classic formulation (1999a, p. 5): even if

limited by circumstances transmitted to them from the past, agents still make their own history. This insight is brought to the field of IR/IHS through an analysis of state-formation, requiring a study of such strategies of reproduction in their geopolitical aspect. The idea of “strategies of spatialization” (Lacher, 2006) highlights the geopolitical aspect of class struggle, contesting, reinforcing, creating and transforming the forms of territorialised authority encountered in any context.

In sum, the issues raised by this thesis can be formulated as two core sets of questions. Theoretically, how can we build a theory of IR/IHS that is able not only to capture historical specificities such as those encountered in Brazilian state-formation, but also to derive a theoretical gain from them? Can history be the *explanans* rather than the *explanandum*? In other words, can it provide a source for explanations rather than just confirming or rejecting general theoretical explanations? If so, is it sufficient to get rid of the taint of Eurocentrism? The tentative answer provided in this thesis to this first set of questions was outlined above. I argue that by answering the first question with a reinterpretation of the role of theory in relation to history – that is, if rather than explaining the production of historical outcomes theory guides the analysis towards the search for a historical explanation – the others can be answered in the affirmative. I also suggest that PM can provide the theoretical framework for this historicist analysis, once its own legacy of historicism is recovered and isolated from structuralist tendencies.

A second set of questions refers to the empirical side of this research. What can this historicist account reveal about the Brazilian case study? How does it contribute to the understanding of the state-system as a whole? If the theoretical innovation intended aims at capturing historical specificity, this study should then be able to identify the specificity of Brazilian state-formation and provide an explanation of how it was produced through the social and geopolitical disputes between actors. The theoretical contribution of PM as a historicist method also provides an empirical contribution to the understanding of the state-system, and of the origins of the Brazilian state.

The empirical contribution consists in showing how the social and geopolitical disputes that drive the creation of Brazil as a political entity under Portuguese colonialism and its later transition to sovereign statehood are not captured by overarching theories of the states-system. Theoretical explanations centred on the expansion of the international society (Bull, 1977; Bull and Watson, 1984; Dunne and

Reus-Smit, 2017), on transformations within the structures of the world-system (Arrighi, 1994; Wallerstein, 1974, 1983), on transitions between modes of production with intermediary “amalgamated” forms (Anievas and Nisancioglu, 2015; Morton, 2007a, 2010a), or on the colonial difference (Mignolo, 2005, 2008, 2011, Quijano, 2007, 2008) present such disputes as a part of their own frameworks. In doing so, the practices and strategies put in place by actors involved are not interpreted as part of the contexts in which they existed, but as part of these broader theoretical narratives.

This historicist analysis of the Brazilian trajectory towards statehood allows for some important contributions to important topics of IR/IHS. Firstly, in showing how Portuguese colonial practices developed through the different challenges they faced between the 16th and early 19th centuries, this account challenges reified definitions of “colonialism” while pointing at the need to understand colonial strategies within the context of the social and geopolitical disputes between the classes that shape them. Secondly, tracing the making of Brazilian formal independence to the conflict between Brazilian landowners and Portuguese aristocrats with the mediation of British imperial interests in South America, this thesis provides a view of statehood that is very attached to its geopolitical context. That is, rather than assuming the existence of a “national interest” that provides some kind of internal cohesion to the state, it highlights the disputes between spatial practices and notions of territoriality that are at the state’s core. Thirdly, a historicist account of colonial slavery that moves beyond its characterisation as a “combined” or “intermediary” social formation allows for a better understanding of the process through which it is abolished in Brazil in late 19th century, by avoiding its automatic identification as a transition to capitalism in itself. The transition to capitalism does not explain why the “modernisation” of social relations identified in some regions coexisted with the strengthening of personalist ties in others. Instead, the many changes in Brazilian society from 1850 to 1889 are analysed through the lens of the differentiation of social practices of reproduction within its ruling class as the outcome of distinct responses to vertical and horizontal class struggle.

This research contributes to some of the main topics in IR/IHS: colonialism and slavery in the Americas, the rise of a system of sovereign states, and the global expansion of capitalism. The common argument made in relation to all of those relates back to the historicist method suggested here. In order to best understand these processes, the suggestion presented here is to identify the social and geopolitical forces

driving them in each context, and to track the different resulting outcomes to the context-specific configurations of vertical and horizontal class struggle. Departing from the teleological assumptions implied in overarching narratives, the suggestion proposed here is anchored in two elements. Firstly, a genealogical conception of social subjectivity, that is, the notion of class as an ongoing historical process, constantly in the making, rather than as a structure logically derived from a mode of production. Secondly, a notion of geopolitics that emphasises the spatial aspect of social relations, placing spatialization strategies as a component of practices of reproduction and, as such, of class struggle.

The contributions towards the development of a historicist method of historical sociology and towards the discussions on colonialism, the state-system, capitalism and others are intimately related in this thesis. The opposite happens in the current theories of IR that aim to explain the processes of state-formation in Brazil (and in Latin America as a whole): they operate with a divide between the theoretical narrative of these broader processes and the historical specificities of each context, which are accommodated within their corresponding framework as either “confirmations” or “exceptions”. I begin the thesis with an analysis of such theories (Chapter 1), pointing out the limitations in the way in which they dialogue with historical specificity. These limitations come from the fact that they rely, in different ways, in theoretical assumptions that provide them with a grand narrative, replacing the need for socio-historical research with a structuralist account of a given aspect of social reality. By looking at them in detail I point out these assumptions and suggest an alternative direction of research.

The alternative suggested is drawn from a reformulation of the PM tradition. This reformulation consists in an assessment of the relation between history and theory in order to maximise the theoretical innovations drawn from the historical specificity provided by agency-centred accounts. It redefines the role of social theory as a methodology for historical analysis in which categories must be grounded in their particular historical context. While this does not remove the need for abstraction, it adds a necessity to ground abstract categories into concrete experiences rather than building an explanatory account from the abstractions themselves which partially fits the historical record. In sum, the suggestion consists of offering “history” as the answer to the riddle proposed by Chico Buarque and Milton Nascimento (in this thesis’ epigraph). History has no decency, cannot be censored, and makes no sense. That is,

it cannot be understood through overarching categories that obscure the struggles lived by concrete historical actors, by real people. It can only be understood through their agencies: through the solutions (both failed and successful) they applied to the situations they faced.

My emphasis here is on how this insight can be useful to rethink the field of geopolitics. Rather than having the field of “geopolitics” as a “sub-sphere” within the “political” – that is, as a general abstraction – I suggest a reinterpretation that redefines its limits by basing it on social practices around which notions of territory and space are constructed. This leaves us with a number of contested geopolitical practices – *geopolicies* – employed by concrete historical subjects in their processes of social reproduction, rather than an analytically separate field of political struggles.

Having addressed the methodological commitments that inform my historicist analysis of Brazilian state-formation, I begin such analysis (in Chapter 3) by reassessing the historical evolution of Portuguese colonialism in South America. Starting from the roots of maritime expansion as a geopolitical practice employed by Portuguese nobility and merchants from the early 15th century onwards, I trace the evolution of their territorial practices within the wider intra-European and inter-Atlantic geopolitical conflicts that shaped Portuguese colonialism in Latin America. I reassess the colonial encounter through a historicist lens, that is, rather than taking the colonial difference for granted, I demonstrate how differentiation is an outcome of the particular way in which their interaction takes place. Another important aspect of this analysis is an account of how Britain becomes a major actor in the affairs of the Portuguese Empire in the 18th century, influencing the trajectory of Portuguese-Brazilian relations in a decisive way. By tracing the geopolitical practices of these actors involved and the outcomes of their encounters, this analysis allows for a novel interpretation of the colonial period of Brazilian history that moves away from the narratives based on an overarching logic of colonialism, replacing them with the contingent and unprecedented outcomes of clashing geopolicies.

The next step (Chapter 4) tracks how that colonial relation is transformed in the early 19th century, culminating with the formal independence of Brazil, the constitution of a sovereign monarchy under the House of Braganza, and its insertion into the wider geopolitics of British informal empire. Such an account builds upon the clashes between the Portuguese aristocracy, British foreign policy and the geopolitical strategies employed by the Brazilian elite. With Napoleon’s invasion of Portugal in

1808 and the transfer of the Portuguese court to Rio under British protection, the entanglement between these three actors becomes the driving force behind the institutional developments within the Luso-Brazilian Empire. Ultimately, the tensions between the “Brazilian” and “Portuguese” factions lead to Brazilian formal independence – mediated by Britain – and to the establishment of an unstable monarchy in Rio under Pedro I. These tensions escalate throughout the First Empire, resulting in Pedro I’s abdication, followed by a series of separatist rebellions under the Regency.

The last part of this historical study (Chapter 5), demonstrates that, rather than uniting around a “national interest” and promoting “civilisation”, “modernisation”, or “development”, the Brazilian elites are divided by important differences in their strategies of reproduction. These differences become clear in the reforms in land property, and in the early attempts at industrialisation in partnership with British capital. The most central dispute within the Brazilian elites revolves around the slave trade and the very continuity of slavery until 1888. The surge in slave resistance in the second half of the 19th century and the growth of the abolitionist movement led to serious political instability in the 1870s and 1880s. Those landowners who were already in a transition towards free labour – especially the coffee planters of the Western portion of the São Paulo province – were in a more comfortable position to respond to these pressures from below, while others still defended the use of slaves until the very end. After the abolition of slavery, the instability caused by that long dispute was sufficient to bring down the monarchy, as well as the aristocratic portion of the landowning class around the Court in Rio. The main actors in the republic would be the *oeste paulista* planters, the coffee barons whose practices had shifted away from slavery towards incentivising the migration of European peasants and wage-labourers.

This historical reconstruction touches upon some of the main themes of IR/IHS, such as colonialism, sovereignty, the expansion of capitalism, and development. By focusing on how these notions are constructed in the Brazilian context, this research develops a new perspective through which each of them might be reconsidered. Most importantly, it argues for a rejection of the use of such notions as general abstractions. They become concrete analytical elements by being grounded in the practices of concrete actors, who mobilise them in their own practices of reproduction. By making this argument, I provide a meaningful contribution for the grounding of social categories in concrete historical experiences. In particular, this

contribution provides an outline for political guidelines through which these themes can be reinterpreted within the specificities of Brazilian history by highlighting how ideas revolving around statehood were used in crucial moments, ever since Brazil's very creation and consolidation as a sovereign state.

Chapter 1 – The IR Debate on Latin America and the Expansion of “Europe”

Introduction

The object of this research is the long-term process of state-formation in Brazil in geopolitical context, emphasising its historical (social and geopolitical) specificity. By state-formation, I mean the creation of a formally sovereign territorial entity, covering both the establishment of its geographical limits (the territorial borders of that sovereign authority) and – most importantly – the transformations in the institutional framework through which political authority is employed and legitimised. The aim is to demonstrate how sovereign statehood itself is an outcome of class relations, both within the entity that came to be constituted as Brazil and through its transatlantic connections. This thesis rejects accounts that derive sovereign statehood either from processes of international legal-normative “recognition”, from a pre-constituted “national interest”, or from a ahistorical conception of a “mode of production”. This first chapter is devoted to the discussion of existing accounts of extra-European state-formation that are challenged in some form or degree by this account. This delimitation of my object serves as a reference to situate this study within the discipline of IR, in its field of IHS¹, but also creates exclusions as it distances this research from other interrelated (yet distinct) historical processes and research practices. As a matter of clarification regarding the scope of this research, two of such exclusions need to be brought up.

Firstly, the framing of the object draws a distinction between Brazil as a state, and as a nation. As this work is focused on the former, it does not engage in significant detail with the vast literature that emphasises the identity politics around the creation of the Brazilian “imagined community”. The phenomenon of nationalism, as it is commonly understood in the social sciences, becomes a part of Brazilian history as a very distinct process from that of state-formation as I described it above. In that sense, while state-formation begins to unfold in the 19th century, it makes little sense to speak of a “nation-state” in that period². Tracking the construction of a nation in Brazil, the

¹ By employing a methodology that relies on social property relations, and contested practices of social reproduction – as will be discussed later – this study is also close to the field of GPE.

² Instead, throughout most of the 19th century, the Brazilian elite repeatedly expresses a concern with the instability and insecurity caused by the absence of a “homogenous nation” (de Azevedo, 1987).

creation of an identity that brings together the “Brazilian people”, would require a different analytical focus, literature, chronological framing, in sum, an entirely different research.

Secondly, this research makes no attempt of uncovering a set of hidden or long-lost facts of Brazilian history. Instead, it offers a reinterpretation of the existing literature on Brazilian historiography – most of which is unknown to the field of IR – in order to highlight how it subverts the expectations created by existing accounts of state-formation in IR. For that reason, that historiography is addressed with an emphasis on its accepted narratives, rather than on its internal debates, without succumbing to selection bias. This allows this research to rely mostly on secondary sources – the major works of Brazilian history – while making occasional references to debates between them across the entire thesis, when such controversies are important for the main course of inquiry. In order to critically assess this historiography, its own meta-historical assumptions would need to be discussed, resulting in a major shift in the object of this study and its disciplinary identity, which would in turn lead to a completely different academic contribution. Since this historiographical literature provides a neglected, but powerful narrative of Brazilian historical experience, it will not be discussed at this moment. Instead, the debates within Brazilian historiography will be brought up along the empirical chapters, when they become relevant to the point at hand. The focus of this chapter is to introduce the existing accounts of extra-European state-formation in the discipline of IR that are challenged in some form by a careful analysis of Brazilian history.

Returning to IR, the current dominant voices within the broader discipline – comprising the sub-disciplines of IHS and GPE – provide competing accounts of the historical process through which the modern state-system is constructed. By looking specifically for accounts of state-formation outside Europe, in Latin America, and ultimately, of the Brazilian case in particular, the number of dissonant voices is reduced, but a clear distinction still remains between those competing theoretical approaches. Three of them are particularly relevant, and will be presented and discussed in this chapter in the following order.

The first one is what I call the “normative” account of Brazilian state-formation, derived from the English School and IR Constructivism. It is built around a narrative of expansion (or more recently, globalisation) of International Society that relies on a set of norms and values that are shared by the members of said society. The

process of state-formation in Latin America is then seen as part of the globalisation of the International Society through the entry of non-European members, as some of its core values (sovereign statehood, diplomacy, etc.) become accepted by more states around the globe.

The critical Marxist IR literature forms the second theoretical tradition discussed here. This is not one single cohesive narrative of Latin-American state-formation. Instead, there are three interpretations of Marxism in IR (World-Systems Theory, Uneven and Combined Development, and Neogramscianism) whose accounts of the states-system emphasise different elements, that can nevertheless be read in complementary ways. All of them work with a notion of theory that provides mechanisms derived from an element of social reality that explain processes of state-formation: the modern world-system, the “laws” of unevenness and combination, and the process of passive revolution, respectively.

Thirdly, the Postcolonial tradition of IR presents a different account of non-European state-formation. Its particular Latin American version is known as Decolonial Theory, and focuses on the intrinsic relation between modernity and coloniality rooted in the colonial encounter as the origin of the World-System and its specific global/racial division of labour. In this account, state-formation in Latin America is seen as a transformation of colonial modernity. As such, it needs to be understood as a reconfiguration of the geopolitics of knowledge: the notion of sovereignty, with its pretension to universality, must be subjected to an epistemological critique and located on the Western side of the colonial difference, which is what they proceed to do in their work.

In addition, some IR scholars within Brazil have built a narrative around a “Brazilian tradition” of foreign policy, that analyses the historical evolution of Brazilian practices of foreign policy in the 19th and 20th centuries. Even though this narrative is based on important shifts in key aspects of Brazilian diplomatic strategy, in a way that such shifts are often tied to Brazil’s own political transformations, it is also anchored to a rigid definition of “national interest”, which is itself based on the idea of “development” as its main goal.

The argument that ties this chapter together (appearing in the discussion of each of the three narratives above) consists in the claim that none of those approaches can account for the social and geopolitical origins of state-formation in the Brazilian case. By relying in different ways on the structural division of social reality into different

spheres, they cannot account for the particularity of the Brazilian trajectory towards statehood. The problem is not merely one of specification, *i.e.*, it cannot be solved by simply adding historical specificity onto their conceptions of state-formation. Instead, as these three competing accounts of state-formation bring some assumptions that are subverted by a careful analysis of the Brazilian case, the theoretical premises of these traditions themselves must be reconsidered. The discussion of the assumptions and premises of each of those approaches is detailed below. The next chapter will suggest the alternative of radical historicism: that is, replacing explanatory theory with a methodology for historical analysis.

The Normative Account of International Society and Latin American Statehood

The most common “myth of origin” of IR as a discipline goes back to the first decades of the twentieth century. At that point, one of its main distinctive features was a tight definition of its object of analysis: the “international system”, composed mostly by sovereign states. This was part of the common ground upon which Realists and Liberals were confronting each other in what became known as the discipline's first great debate³. The establishment of the discipline with the sovereign state at its core results in the so-called “domestic analogy”, where states are said to coexist in such system in a manner analogous to that in which individuals form a society (Bull, 1977; Carr, 1946; Suganami, 1989). Therefore, one of the distinctive traits of what is called “mainstream IR Theory” is a state-centric approach to the international system which carries an ontological divide between the domestic and the international political spheres (Waltz, 1979). Among these theories, one of the most influential accounts of how such a system of sovereign states came into existence is found among the proponents of the English School. At the core of this account we find the growing acceptance of the core norms of an “international society”, such as sovereignty itself.

Classical International Relations Theory – The English School (ES)

In its origin, the ES argument placed a strong emphasis on the centrality of the

³ At least according to this most common myth of origin. The association of the origins of the discipline with the “great debates” narrative has been questioned from a variety of perspectives (Owens, 2015; Smith, 2000; Tickner and Wæver, 2009; Vitalis, 2015).

state as the unit through which international politics could be understood. In the work of Hedley Bull (1977), although three patterns of international politics can be identified (international system, international society and world society), they are all built from the premise that the “state” is the entity that stands between the “domestic” and “international” orders:

“The starting point of international relations is the existence of states, or independent political communities each of which possesses a government and asserts sovereignty in relation to a particular portion of the earth’s surface and a particular segment of the human population.” (Bull, 1977, p. 8, *italics in the original*)

Still according to Bull’s definitions, when states operate at a minimum level of interaction in which they have “sufficient impact on one another’s decisions”, their orderly coexistence must be understood as a whole, that is, as an “international system” (Bull, 1977, pp. 9–10). Through such interaction, an international system might become an international society. That is, when:

“a group of states (...) conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another, and share in the working of common institutions. If states today form an international society (...), this is because, recognising certain common interests and perhaps some common values, they regard themselves as bound by certain rules in dealing with one another, such as that they should respect one another’s claims to independence, that they should honour agreements into which they enter, and that they should be subject to certain limitations in exercising force against one another. At the same time, they cooperate in the working of institutions such as the forms of procedures of international law, the machinery of diplomacy and general international organisation, and the customs and conventions of war.” (Bull, 1977, p. 13).

In sum, according to the ES’s original argument, when a system of states develops a shared set of norms and values to the point of strengthening their cooperation in ordered ways, it becomes an international society. The narrative of that process in world history comprises two main moments: firstly, the transoceanic expansion of the European international system in the 15th century, when it engulfs most of the world territory; and secondly, the expansion of the European international society in 18th and 19th centuries, when non-European political communities join the same set of values, norms, institutions, and procedures developed by European states (Bull and Watson, 1984; Watson, 1992). In this sense, state-formation is conceived as the crucial moment in which such communities agree to the primary goals previously established in that society – that is, the moment of formal recognition as a sovereign state through the mechanisms of diplomacy and international law. By agreeing to the primary goals⁴ and

⁴ According to Bull, the primary goals of international order are: to preserve the system and society of states, to maintain the mutual independence and external sovereignty between individual states, and the maintenance of peace (not in the sense of a perpetual peace, but of absence of war among member states

abiding by the same rules as the other states in the international society, the entering members would be reaching the “standards of civilization”, distancing themselves from “barbarism” (Bull and Watson, 1984; Buzan and Little, 1994; Gong, 1984).

This narrative by Bull and Watson presented above was criticised since its inception. Among such critiques, two points are particularly important for providing the basis for renewing this normative account of state-formation. The first of them goes against the idea that an international system of strategic calculations precedes an international society in which norms and values are shared among its member states (Reus-Smit, 1999, 2013; Wendt, 1999). The second critiques the Eurocentrism in Bull and Watson’s proposition of a constant idea of “order” created in Europe and simply expanded to the global scale, premised on the dichotomy of the “civilised” and the “barbarian” (Hobson, 2012; Schulz, 2014; Shilliam, 2011). The development of the ES narrative of expansion of the international society through these critiques makes an important difference for its account of state-formation in Latin America.

The International Society Reconsidered

The argument presented by Bull and Watson is built on the assumption that before an international society can be constituted through the achievement of common rules, norms, institutions, and procedures among its member states, there is always a pre-existing international system of states interacting without such shared principles⁵ (Bull, 1977; Bull and Watson, 1984; Watson, 1992). Among the critiques of this assumption, particularly relevant is the one coming from the constructivist IR scholars (Reus-Smit, 1999, 2013; Wendt, 1999). According to them, we cannot speak of a “pre-social” moment of international politics, as every interaction between different political communities (including “first contact” situations) is always heavy with meanings and symbolism from all sides.

The extension of this objection reaches the role played by the notion of sovereignty as the core of the “international society”. Bull makes it perfectly clear that

as the rule and not the exception). In addition, the elementary goals of the social order are also protected internationally: to protect life against bodily harm, to ensure that agreements will be kept, and to ensure the stability of property (Bull, 1977, pp. 16–9)

⁵ The analytical division imposed by Bull between the international system and international society is discussed within ES circles as well (Berridge, 1980), but no systematic account of a historical relation between them is developed in more detail than by Bull and Watson (1984)

“[t]he starting point of international relations is the existence of *states*”, understood as the political entity that holds sovereignty over a given territory and population (Bull, 1977, p. 8). In this sense, sovereignty is imbued with a fixed meaning, leaving room for the application of its main traits since antiquity (Buzan and Little, 1994, 2000; Watson, 1992). Instead, constructivist scholars argue for a more historically nuanced understanding of sovereignty, grounding it in “practical discourse”. Sovereignty, then, is not a value that is embedded with a self-evident legitimacy, but one that is legitimated by other social norms shared across those political communities (Reus-Smit, 1999, pp. 158–9). This creates a problem for some important elements of the ES, such as Gerrit Gong’s idea of the “standard of civilization” as a dividing line in the history of international politics between international society and its pre-social, or systemic form (Gong, 1984). If the latter is also based on the social construction of norms, values and identities, it follows that it cannot be simply regarded as “barbarism”. The difference between them is not one of civilization, but of different sets of norms and values regulating interstate interaction.

Another critique that refers to the notion of “standard of civilization” employed by Gong is that of its Eurocentrism. By using the duality civilization/barbarism to refer to the European international society and its expansion towards non-Europe, it associates the virtues of good governance of international order to the European cultural background and social practices, and sets to the non-Europeans the condition of abiding by that set of cultural values in order to achieve membership in that society. In other words, the only way in which non-European political communities can hope to be a part of international society and rise up to the “standard of civilisation” is by accepting the imposition of European values as their own. This is evident not only in Gong’s work (1984, pp. 14–5), but also in Bull and Watson’s account of the expansion of international society (Bull and Watson, 1984). The inclusion of non-European members is a challenge to the society’s order, precisely because the cultural diversity of these new members puts the cultural cohesion of that society (*i.e.*, its European values) at risk. About Latin America in particular, Bull and Watson argue that the reason why these states were so easily accepted into the international society is the fact that their independences were organised by the white European elites, whose “political consciousness” and “experience of how a ‘civilized’ government should operate” made the acceptance of those states “plausible and acceptable to a large section of European opinion” (Bull and Watson, 1984, pp. 131–2).

The deepest engagement with the “standard of civilisation” comes from Carsten-Andreas Schulz’s efforts to reinterpret it. According to Schulz, “the ‘standard of civilisation’ needs to be understood as part of a wider civilizational discourse that rationalised inequalities in international society” (Schulz, 2014, p. 838). Instead of being a criterion for admission into the international society, the ‘standard of civilisation’ needs to be understood as a norm that codifies a state’s position in the many forms of stratification in play within that society. Schulz, then, takes Reus-Smit rejection of the division present in Bull and Watson between a “society” and a “system”. But he also pushes it forward by pointing at the crucial role played by colonialism in the formation of the international society (Clark, 2005, pp. 33–50; Schulz, 2014, pp. 842–3). By this account, the recognition of a sovereign state is not a signal of its admission to the international society, much less of its belonging to that society’s “core”. Instead, it is a further step on the civilizational ladder, changing that state’s standing on the heterarchical stratifications of the society.

These developments of the notions of “international society” and the “standard of civilisation” towards a constructivist approach have provided ultimately normative accounts of state-formation in Brazil (and Latin America).

The normative account of Brazilian state-formation: assumptions and expectations

The more traditional ES account assumes a clearer separation between a “system” and a “society” of states, and, accordingly, sees in the act of international recognition a crucial moment of state-formation, in which new members of the society are created. That is essentially the argument originally proposed by Bull and Watson (1984), and it provides the basis for more recent accounts on the particularity of a regional international society in Latin America, created around regionally and culturally specific norms (Kacowicz, 2005). This argument not only puts the notion of the state and its territorial sovereignty as the core element of the analysis, but also takes it for granted. Arie Kacowicz’s analysis of the regional norms that are specific to the Latin American international society⁶ acknowledges that they are ultimately grounded

⁶ Kacowicz is unclear as to the extent in which they differ from the standard norms of the international society described by Bull. He sums it up as “Latin America is rather unique in its plethora of formally stated norms and declarative intentions of a certain prescriptive behaviour, dating back to the beginning of the 19th century” (Kacowicz, 2005, p. 174). The norms themselves, however, are similar to those encountered elsewhere: recognition of state sovereignty, equality, and of its territorial integrity (*uti*

in the region's colonial past, but only traces them to the interactions of Latin American states after their independence and recognition, within the standards of European diplomacy and treaties. Bull and Watson admittedly retrace the origins of such sovereign entities to their independence, but fail to account for their historical specificities. By leaving them to the work of the "political consciousness" of white and Christian elites, they fail to account for the social history that shaped the formation, outcomes, and policy-making of sovereign states in the arena of international politics⁷.

Therefore, while for Kacowicz the story of Latin American international politics begins after formal independence, for Bull and Watson the history of sovereignty ends once it reaches a standard that corresponds to the European norms. What both of these accounts take for granted is a connection between the European notion of sovereignty and a "national interest" embodied in it, which motivates diplomatic behaviour and foreign policy. Kacowicz explicitly develops this norm-based approach in a way that makes it compatible with rational choice theory, pointing to a "false dichotomy between normative research and rational choice" (Kacowicz, 2005, pp. 26, 182). This assumes that the "national interest" follows immediately from the fact of statehood, being disembodied of any social history. Similarly, the cultural formulation of "international norms" is left as an empty notion, and the processes through which cultural practices are codified into diplomatic practice and political institutions are not investigated.

The more constructivist version of international society proposed by Reus-Smit and Schulz suggests a more elaborate account of Brazilian history, but still one that is based on similar assumptions. While they understand sovereignty as a social construct, whose meaning is given in a context shaped by other norms and values, it is still read as "the basic organising principle of our present society of states" (Reus-Smit, 1999, p. 159). That is, despite the acknowledgement of the social roots of sovereignty, the notion is still reified as the starting point of the "society of states", or of international politics. The relation between sovereignty and a "national interest" is not as direct as

possidetis), peaceful settlement of disputes, respect to Human Rights, the creation of multilateral forums of cooperation, etc. The colonial past does not offer a significant variation to the norms, but merely influences the trajectory of their development. For instance, the idea of sovereignty and mutual recognition is presented against the threat of U.S. dominance, under the guise of Panamericanism (Kacowicz, 2005, pp. 46–64).

⁷ An example is how Watson's account of Brazil in the international system/society fails to mention the issue of slavery (Watson, 1992, pp. 218–9, 266–7).

it is in Kacowicz's formulation, but mediated by the state's identity. Nevertheless, as sovereignty still holds its privileged place in the formation of a *state's* identity, it is once again emptied of its sociological context. Although the reformulation of ES's traditional account is described as "social all the way down" (Reus-Smit and Dunne, 2017, p. 31), the formulation of state identity and foreign policy still stands outside of its social history.

The main contribution of Latin America to the "great transformation" of the 19th century is precisely its transition to sovereign statehood (Buzan, 2017; Buzan and Lawson, 2015), and the account of its formal independence from the colonial powers of Portugal and Spain is not grounded in social history. In Reus-Smit's account of the independences of Spanish American colonies, these processes are analysed through an idea of sovereignty that, in the absence of a monarch (as was the case of Spain after the Napoleonic invasion), belongs to the people⁸ (Reus-Smit, 2013, pp. 149–50). In Schulz's argument, the construction of Brazilian identity in the international society (and therefore, of Brazilian foreign policy objectives) is shaped by its image of "backwards and exotic", and by a comparison with other "less 'civilised' peoples". The continuity of slavery in Brazil after its recognition as a sovereign state is treated as a problem:

“(...) within Brazil, slavery became increasingly seen as an anachronistic institution that negated the empire its rightful place in the community of states. However, rather than framing the issue in humanitarian terms, abolitionists such as Joaquim Nabuco argued that slavery would hold back civilisation in the country, among other things, by discouraging white immigration.” (Schulz, 2014, p. 851)

This formulation begs the question of the conditions of the “national interest” within the sovereign entity. But, rather than being rooted it in socio-political actors, it is simply derived from the norms around sovereignty: the “standard of civilisation”. In this sense, it is assumed, as in the passage above, that such interest aims at “civilising” Brazilian society. Although it is correct in affirming that some Brazilian personalities of the period, such as the Emperor Pedro II and Joaquim Nabuco, saw slavery as an “anachronistic institution” that was detrimental to the Empire's civilizational standing, it cannot account for the fact that a significant and influent portion of Brazilian elite

⁸ According to Mikulas Fabry, this is part of an important innovation in the practice of state recognition brought by the post-Vienna independences in Latin America. The rejection of the principle of dynasticism by Britain and the US was developed in response to the independence struggles in the region and effectively transformed the practice of recognition and the principle of non-intervention (Fabry, 2010, pp. 49–50)

defended slavery up until its very last days. Taking this interpretation of a norm-derived national interest even further, the prohibition of the slave trade in Brazil in 1850 is even read as a “search for membership in international society” (Sochaczewski, 2017, p. 27) rather than as an outcome of a political dispute between British diplomatic pressures and a landowning elite that depended on that trade.

In sum, the normative account of state-formation lacks a social understanding of “national interest” formation. Without it, these scholars from the ES and Constructivists tend to assume that such an interest is either derived from the single fact of sovereignty, or from the international norms (the “standard of civilisation”) around it. In doing so, they miss the history of social disputes and (often violent) clashes that revolve around geopolitics and foreign policy making. The next section will focus on Marxism as a tradition that is built upon the idea of social disputes (that is, class struggle) as its main analytical tool, with an emphasis on interpretations that, in different ways and degrees, bring structuralist assumptions into historical analysis.

IR Marxism and the Challenge of Structuralism

The immediate challenge that presents itself to a review on Marxist IR is the variety of interpretations that have spun out of Marx’s extensive *oeuvre*. For this reason, here they are restricted to those that provide an account of the origins and expansion of the states-system: World-Systems Theory (UCD), Neogramscianism, and Uneven and Combined Development (UCD). As they draw on different aspects of Marxism and on the works of different Marxist authors, the discussion below will look at each of them separately. The common element in these analyses is the way in which the three approaches speak to the challenges posed by structuralism and Eurocentrism in Marxist theory.

World-Systems Theory (WST)

Heavily influenced by Dependency Theory (Furtado, 1963; Gunder Frank, 1969a) and the *longue durée* history of the French *Annales* school (Braudel, 1984), Immanuel Wallerstein addressed the question of the discipline’s analytical unit. The core argument resides in the idea that social structures cannot be contained within national boundaries. Instead, all the economic ties that condition the social dynamics

of such structures must be embraced by a narrative that aims at understanding them. That being the case, Braudel proposes the concept of a “world-economy”, which Wallerstein then transforms into that of a “world-system”. According to him:

“A world-system is a social system, one that has boundaries, structures, member groups, rules of legitimation and coherence. Its life is made up of the conflicting forces which hold it together by tension, and tear it apart as each group seeks eternally to remold it to its advantage. It has the characteristics of an organism, in that it has a life-span over which its characteristics change in some respects and remain stable in others. One can define its structures as being at different times strong or weak in terms of the internal logic of its functioning.

What characterizes a social system in my view is the fact that life within it is largely self-contained, and that the dynamics of its development are largely internal. The reader may feel that the use of the term ‘largely’ is a case of academic weaseling. I admit I cannot quantify it. Probably no one ever will be able to do so, as the definition is based on a counterfactual hypothesis: If the system, for any reason, were to be cut off from all external forces (which virtually never happens), the definition implies that the system would continue to function substantially in the same manner.” (Wallerstein, 1974, p. 347)

Wallerstein’s starting point is the crucial idea that social relations cannot be contained within national borders. By proposing such argument, he opens space for an interdisciplinary dialogue placing IR at a crossroads between Sociology, History and Political Economy. However, because he insists on such a broad and problematic category as the “world-system” as his unit of analysis, his account of European and world history has difficulties in understanding historical specificity and change. By emphasising the unequal relations between core, periphery and semi-periphery, he is normally unable to explain variations within those areas. As the framework focuses on these systemic relations, it encounters problems when explaining how different outcomes are produced within the core, or within the periphery. At the same time, it creates a “system-maintenance bias: as these unequal relations are self-reproducing and self-reinforcing, the historical processes of systemic transformation are not captured by its analytical framework (Brenner, 1977; Cox, 1981, p. 127; Wallerstein, 1974, pp. 19–38).

The accounts of how the recognitions of formal independence in the American continent are interpreted as an instance of systemic change serve as a pristine example of such limitations (Arrighi, 1994; Chase-Dunn, 1998; Wallerstein, 1989). These scholars do not feel the need to go into the historical specificities of the social processes and political disputes that lead to the outcome of independence in the American continent, since the important element of explanation is their position in the system’s periphery or semi-periphery. Both Arrighi and Wallerstein seem comfortable in describing the disintegration of colonial empires as an outcome of the intra-core

hegemonic disputes (in particular, between Britain and France), leaving little to no space to the agency of peripheral classes in the making of their history (Arrighi, 1994, pp. 54–5; Wallerstein, 1989, pp. 214–5). The most significant aspect of that reshaping of the world-system’s political structure is not how the agencies of a variety of central and peripheral classes have entered a dispute over the prevalent forms of territorial organisation. Instead, the production of that historical change seems to be entirely a product of a hegemonic dispute. The historical assumption present in this perspective is that, beyond its role in that hegemonic dispute, those independences are of very little importance. After all, the fact that those processes of state-formation take place within the dynamics of the world-system mean that they do not change, but reproduce the distinction between core and peripheral states in terms of differential exploitation of labour, trade composition, and so on (Chase-Dunn, 1998, pp. 225–31, 239–41).

“Because of the importance of states in the process of capitalist accumulation, all capitalists desire to utilize state power for regulating the market to their own advantage. Thus, dominant groups of capitalists attempt to institutionalize their interests within the state. But the type of state-formation is dependent on the *nature* of the power block. *The industrial-commercial-financial block in core states produces strong states, while the export-oriented block in peripheral states produces weaker states.*” (Chase-Dunn, 1998, p. 240, italics in the original)

This does not mean, however, that the creation of states can be disregarded as a minor trait in the system’s configuration. Wallerstein recognises that states are the “most effective levers of political adjustment”, their constitution being “one of the central institutional achievements of historical capitalism” (Wallerstein, 1983, p. 48). However, while describing its importance, he focuses on “internal” elements of state-power (territorial jurisdiction, control over relations of production, taxation, and monopoly of force), leaving foreign policy and international relations to “the rules of the interstate system”, where disputes for capital accumulation provide the crucial rules for interpreting the “balance of power” (Wallerstein, 1983, pp. 48–58). Therefore, right after acknowledging the role of the states in the modern world-system he returns to a deterministic account where foreign policy making is seen as the outcome of the constraints of a state’s position in the system’s core or periphery, rather than as related to class struggle.

In his argument, geopolitical disputes and the social production of space are necessarily contained within the rules of capital accumulation, so that it becomes unnecessary to interpret the former beyond the latter. The analytical distinction between the structure of capital accumulation in the world-economy and the

corresponding form of the interstate system comes into play, in a way that allows him to apply his systemic account to the former while leaving the latter to the “balance of power” account, in a move that resembles that employed by Realists to secure for themselves the realm of international politics⁹. Rather than accounting for the connection between social and geopolitical disputes, WST’s way of integrating an international dimension to social analysis is to expand the unit of analysis. As the system is conceptualised as a “largely” self-contained unit, the realm of what counts as “foreign” is very diminished. And even within the system, the account of international politics through the unequal exchange relations in the world-market grounded in social and international divisions of labour leaves the explanation of different outcomes (such as Portuguese colonial expansion in the 15th-16th centuries and the independence of its largest colony in the 19th century) unanswered, creating a theoretical bias towards systemic reproduction, and a relative inability to account for historical change.

This incorporation of an international dimension to social analysis is precisely at the core of a different Marxist intervention in IHS.

Uneven and Combined Development (UCD)

According to a group of IR Marxists, one traditional problem appears through most of the social sciences, which is the assumption that societies exist in abstract isolation. As a consequence, when the interaction between societies becomes part of the analysis it is simply brought in as an isolated element, rather than incorporated as systematic element of human social existence. Therefore, in order to fashion a theoretical perspective that has the coexistence of multiple societies and their interactions at its core, the discipline of IR (or IHS) must be grounded in that ontological multiplicity, rather than remain within the “prison of political science” (Rosenberg, 2006, 2016a)¹⁰.

⁹ Albeit with one important difference: while realists see the system’s rules as a logical result of its anarchical structure, Wallerstein sees the stronger states in the core of the system enforcing the rules upon the weaker peripheral states. While for Waltz (1979) the state-system operates under anarchy, for Wallerstein its core element is hierarchy. For both scholars the “political” and the “economic” are separate spheres, the difference being which of them determines the other. For a critique of this reasoning, see Rosenberg (1994) or Wood (1995).

¹⁰ One difference between these two iterations of Rosenberg’s argument about the contribution of UCD to IR must be noted. While at first he looks for a “sociological definition of the international”

The key for such a conception of IR that brings societal multiplicity at its ontological core is traced back to an insight from Leon Trotsky:

“Unevenness, the most general law of the historic process, reveals itself most sharply and complexly in the destiny of the backward countries. Under the whip of external necessity their backward culture is compelled to make leaps. From the universal law of unevenness thus derives another law which, for the lack of a better name we may call the law of combined development – by which we mean a drawing together of the different stages of the journey, a combining of the separate steps, an amalgam of archaic with more contemporary forms.” (Trotsky, 1980, pp. 15-6)

Based on this formulation by Trotsky, the unevenness and combination as “general laws” of historical development are used as the foundations for a theory of “the international”. Unevenness is here initially understood as a consequence of the different natural environments in which human groups establish themselves and from which they develop. Besides the quantitative variety implied in societal multiplicity, unevenness denotes a qualitative aspect to that variety. The developmental paths followed by each society through time are different, that is, they do not converge to a common result, and do not follow necessarily the same “stages”. As a result, it entails a “multiplicity of cultural form, geographical scale, developmental level and historical temporality” (Rosenberg, 2006, p. 318).

By virtue of the uneven plurality of co-existing societies, the social forms created by their particular paths of development cannot be taken in isolation from each other. It is precisely their co-existence that “turns the descriptive fact of unevenness into a germ of interactive mutation” (Rosenberg, 2013, p. 582). Combination, therefore, means that the historical development of societies cannot be analysed without consideration to that interaction. Such combination is always subjected to different forms of interactions between uneven societies. The “whip of external necessity” and “privilege of backwardness” mentioned by Trotsky in the Russian case are just some of the possibilities of international interactions that lead to the amalgamation of social forms. As a result, the concrete outcomes of combination are always more than the sum of their parts, leading to ever divergent paths of development, rather than to a converging stagiest linearity (Anievas and Nisancioglu, 2015, p. 49; Rosenberg, 2016b). In sum,

“The unevenness of development, we have said, entails multiplicity; and this multiplicity, we have added, is everywhere expressed in a condition of inter-societal coexistence which gives rise to diplomacy. But if so, then what we are really saying, in social theoretical terms, is that the conditions of reproduction which define the concrete existence of any

(Rosenberg, 2006, p. 318), in the more recent version he argues that starting from the fact of societal multiplicity is precisely what sets IR apart from other disciplines (Rosenberg, 2016a).

given society are not limited to the ‘internal’ structures of social relations which formed the starting point of Classical Social Theory. They always include, by virtue of the bare fact of inter-societal coexistence, those external conditions which are the object of diplomatic management.” (Rosenberg, 2006, p. 320)

The core proposition in UCD consists in the rejection of a purely endogenous or internalist notion of development. This also appears elegantly in Kamran Matin’s reformulation of Marx’s “double relationship”, in which the natural and the social are both aspects of the human reproductive activity. According to Matin, including the assumption of societal multiplicity in this understanding of human ontology requires its reconstruction as a “triple relationship where relations among societies have a dialectical relationship with their internal social relationships and external relationship with nature” (Matin, 2013a, pp. 153–4).

For UCD scholars, the solution to the problem of Eurocentrism is to incorporate a plural conception of society in the ontology of social theory (Matin, 2013a, p. 19). In doing so, however, the “so-called laws” of unevenness and combination are inscribed as elements of a general explanatory theory. As logical consequences of the ontological principle of social multiplicity, these “laws” are employed to explain every single instance of historical development once patterns of development and backwardness are identified. Consequently, the aim of historical inquiry might be reduced to the identification of combinations, rather than understanding their production through the open-ended clashes of specific social agencies. Because the analytical role of agency is limited, so is the possibility of theoretical gain from case studies. That is, the historical specificity of a peculiar instance of combined development is normally brought as a confirmation of the general “laws” of unevenness and combination, rather than providing elements to rethink or modify them. In sum, the proposed incorporation of political multiplicity into the ontological core of a general explanatory theory is insufficient to solve the problem of Eurocentrism, since, as a result, historical accounts of social relations are brought in more as confirmation of the general “laws” than as open-ended historical processes disputed by the multiple agencies involved.

This can be seen in a few instances in which UCD scholars have provided arguments about the historical development of Latin America. While there are engagements with “world history” and with *longue durée* perspectives (Anievas and

Martin, 2016; Anievas and Nisancioglu, 2015)¹¹, the one study that engages more directly with Brazilian history is George Novack's account of the effects of the "law" of uneven and combined development in Latin America (Novack, 1972, 1976). His starting point is the unevenness between the levels of development existing in native American societies and the practices introduced in the continent via contact with European colonisers. The central claim is that before a given mode of production can operate according to its "immanent laws" (1976, p. 102), it must be brought into existence in a process that can insert some "special characteristics" (1976, p. 101) into it. In the case of Brazilian slave-based production, he shows how the combination of Portuguese merchant capitalism with slavery created many distortions in Brazilian development, which prevented it from taking a "normal" road to capitalism, such as the one seen in Britain (1976, p. 101). Therefore, once it reached a certain point in its growth, this "Brazilian mode of production", marked by the combination between a capitalist relation to the world market to a non-capitalist way of labour control, operated by its own "internal laws" (1976, p. 103).

It would be unfair to more recent UCD work to hold Novack's as the main point of engagement with their theoretical claims, especially since there are strong differences between the way in which they are used in both cases. However, Novack provides a good example of the problem in holding "the international" as a fixed ontological "sphere" of political interaction:

“(...) on top of the direct exploitation of one class by another, there exists the economic, political, military and cultural domination of one country – even one continent – by another. These two types of exploitation are inseparably united under the colonial system and its imperialist successor.” (Novack, 1976, p. 105)

That is, even though he suggests their union under the practices of colonialism and imperialism, Novack is accepting a separation between class struggle (i.e., the “domestic” or “internal” level) and international or even intercontinental domination¹². In doing so, he is not only separating those as different avenues of social scientific investigation, but also conditioning the latter to the former by relying on structuralist

¹¹ Anievas and Nisancioglu present an argument about the contribution of the colonial encounter for the development of the notion of sovereignty in Europe through the development of cartography (Anievas and Nisancioglu, 2015, pp. 130–41). However, no connection is established between a change in the techniques employed in establishing geographical boundaries and the social practices that constitute sovereignty within and between these territories. Although they demonstrate the transformation in the former, for the latter it remains unclear.

¹² Contrary to Novack, Ben Selwyn argues that the strength of Trotsky's UCD lies precisely in being able to ground its account of late development in both its international and class contexts, as opposed to other theories of IPE centred on the state (Selwyn, 2014, pp. 101–3).

accounts of merchant colonialism as primitive accumulation (Novack, 1976, p. 105). The identification of forms of international politics is dependent on the logics of modes of production. And on the peculiarity of the “Brazilian mode of production”, it is unclear what its “internal laws” are, and, once that combination is established, how its later outcomes such as sovereign statehood are produced.

The more recent versions of UCD are also critical of the structuralism presented in Novack. However, it also uses the “laws” of unevenness and combination as the cornerstone of a general and explanatory theory with transhistorical applicability. For instance, Alex Anievas and Kerem Nisancioglu explain the rise of plantation slavery through the unevenness across the Atlantic (between Europe, Africa and America), and as a unique combination of these elements. Building upon the work of Robbie Shilliam (2009) and Robin Blackburn (2010), their argument provides a general narrative for the rise of plantation slavery in the American colonies as a whole, correctly framing it as “a historically specific response to the challenges (...) that confronted the ruling class – in both Europe and America – in the 17th/18th centuries” (Anievas and Nisancioglu, 2015, p. 154). Despite the richness of the historical narrative, however, their general argument is biased towards the British experience of colonisation in the Caribbean and North America. Some of the elements they use are specifically British, such as the issue of population control after the 18th century industrialisation. The Portuguese colonisation of Brazil faced a different kind of demographic question, in which increasing agricultural productivity and industrialisation were absent. In addition, the Brazilian plantations based on slave labour are established in the 16th century, preceding their narrative (as in the quote above). By centring their general argument about the origins of plantation slavery on the British experience, Anievas and Nisancioglu miss aspects of the uneven experiences of colonisation within the American continent.

Furthermore, by describing the plantations as “‘transitional forms’ of social relations combining complex amalgams of capitalist and non-capitalist relations, production techniques and practices” (Anievas and Nisancioglu, 2015, p. 158), the richness of the historical account employed in the previous step of their argument is left aside. Although they correctly point out that plantations constitute a “*sui generis* mode of combined development”, their description of plantations as amalgamations of different modes of production (Anievas and Nisancioglu, 2015, p. 162) is not sufficient to explain why this particular combination was produced through the practices and

strategies employed by the actors involved in its making. The different ways in which plantations appear and develop in each part of the American continent are subsumed into a single general theory built from the theoretical assumptions of unevenness and combination. The study of Portuguese colonialism in Brazil can highlight a different set of unevennesses and combinations, whose specificities cannot be explained without a historicist analysis that incorporates the agencies that shaped its trajectory in their practices of reproduction.

Neogramscian International Theory

One of the most important elements in Gramscian thought is the notion of “civil society”, and its relation to the state. For that reason, when proposing to ground a Marxist reading of IR around Gramsci’s writings, Robert Cox begins precisely from the argument that there “has been little attempt within the bounds of international relations theory to consider the state/society complex as the basic entity of international relations.”, (Cox, 1981, p. 127)¹³. The Gramscian solution, as he points out, is to account for this “complex” as a whole, addressing the three components of a historical structure: material capabilities, ideas, and institutions. In that sense, the different possible forms a state could assume are seen as outcomes of the interactions between these three levels (Cox, 1981, pp. 135–8). As he sums up:

“The sense of a reciprocal relationship between structure (economic relations) and superstructure (the ethico-political sphere) in Gramsci’s thinking contains the potential for considering state/society complexes as the constituent entities of a world order and for exploring the particular historical forms taken by these complexes.” (Cox, 1981, p. 134)

By drawing on Gramsci, Cox solves the problem of the state through an account of the interactions between social forces, the institutional structure of states, and the ideologies in play in a given historical context. He brings historicism as a central element of critical theory, being the key to avoid the *ceteris paribus* problem of mainstream theory. He highlights the importance of identifying the structural elements of a given context in order to avoid the assumption that any of those are constant or unchangeable. However, this historicism proposed by Cox must be revised in one important aspect. He focuses on “historical structures”, that is, on particular

¹³ Cox also offers a brief critique of WST, pointing at a necessity of a better way of accounting for global social forces without “underrating state power” and “reifying a world system” (Cox, 1981, pp. 127–8).

combinations of “patterns, material conditions and human institutions” that act as “framework[s] for action” (Cox, 1981, p. 135). In doing so, his framework is still built with a structuralist bias, in which this initial structural arrangement is taken as a given, and not in its genealogical perspective, that is, as the outcome of historical processes. An example of such continuing structuralist bias in Cox (and Gramsci) can be found in the use of the idea of “passive revolution” to explain historical processes in the South, such as the processes of state formation in Latin America.

Gramsci develops the notion of passive revolution in three movements (Cox, 1983, pp. 166–7; Hesketh, 2017, pp. 399–401; Morton, 2007a, pp. 150–1). Firstly, in his analysis of the Italian *Risorgimento*, to explain how the combination of international and domestic pressures caused the Italian state-formation in late 19th century to take place without a bourgeois revolution led by a Jacobin-like party. Instead, the concept refers to a “revolution from above”, being a result of elite-led statecraft reforms with an “absence of popular initiative”, aimed at responding to international pressures for modernisation. At the same time, it also tackles a insurrectionary pressure from below, accommodating its demands within a reform of the state’s institution (Gramsci, 1971, pp. 106–114; Morton, 2010a, pp. 317–8). Secondly, he employs the same concept of passive revolution to other processes of European state-formation motivated by “developmental catch up and thereby transforming social relations, but without significant input from below”, such as Germany under Bismarck (Gramsci, 1971, pp. 118–120; Hesketh, 2017, p. 400). Finally, passive revolution is used in the discussion of both Fascism and Fordism, as a technique of statecraft aiming at expanding capitalism while taming the opposing pressures from below. As summarised by Cox:

“The concept of passive revolution is a counterpart to the concept of hegemony in that it describes the condition of a non-hegemonic society – one in which no dominant class has been able to establish a hegemony in Gramsci’s sense of the term. Today this notion of passive revolution, together with its components, caesarism and *trasformismo*, is particularly apposite to industrialising Third World countries.” (Cox, 1983, p. 167)

On these grounds, both Morton and Hesketh argue for the universal applicability of the concept of passive revolution in historical sociology, to account for moments or periods of transformation in social relations of production (“structure”) and statisation (“superstructure”)¹⁴, without the form that such changes are expected

¹⁴ “Structures and superstructures form an ‘historical bloc’. That is to say the complex, contradictory and discordant *ensemble* of the superstructures is the reflection of the *ensemble* of the social relations

to assume: that of a Jacobin-like “active” revolution. The examples they provide are the experiences of post-colonial state-formations, both after 1945 and in the 19th century, and the neoliberal reforms in developing countries (Hesketh, 2013, 2017; Hesketh and Morton, 2014; Morton, 2005, 2007b, 2007a, 2010a, 2010b, 2013). The case of the Mexican Revolution as an example of state-formation is the most explored by these scholars. According to Morton, the international pressures for modernisation (Trotsky’s “whip of external necessity”), and pre-capitalist social relations of production are conflated in a process of state-formation in which the state is conceived as the agent of development, regarded as “permanent primitive accumulation” (Morton, 2013, p. 36). Characterising that event as a passive revolution means to read it through the dialectic of “revolution/restoration”, where the role of analysis is to see which of them predominates (Gramsci, 2000, p. 270). And, since the statification it implies aims precisely at responding to pressures from below and from outside, the crucial element becomes the statecraft techniques employed by the ruling elite in modernising social relations of production while maintaining their own dominance (Hesketh, 2010, pp. 388–9; Jessop, 2015, pp. 178–9; Morton, 2010b, pp. 18–9).

By using this notion of passive revolution as an overarching framework for “Third World” historical experiences, Neogramscian IHS cannot provide a solution to the challenge of Eurocentrism precisely because it frames non-European experiences under this general category rather than being open to their respective particularities. By framing these experiences as instances of the general “world history of the passive revolution of capital” (Morton, 2010b, p. 28), it creates a teleological drive in all of these histories. It seems to assume that, regardless of the variations that each of them may present, they are all headed in the same direction: a transition towards capitalism. In many instances, this can only be held with the imposition of theoretical assumptions

of production” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 366). This is not to accuse Gramsci, or any of the Neogramscians mentioned here, of determinism or economicism. Gramsci himself makes a constant effort to demonstrate how the two are bound together, in constant mutual determination (Cox, 1983, pp. 167–8). Instead, the point here echoes Ellen Wood’s position, according to which “[h]owever much we may stress the interaction among ‘factors’, these theoretical practices mislead because they obscure not only the historical processes by which modes of production are constituted but also the structural definition of productive systems as living social phenomena” (Wood, 1995, p. 25). The separation between base (or structure) and superstructure is therefore not inherently determinist, but reminiscent of a structuralist mode of theorisation. “‘Political Marxism’”, Wood continues, “does not present the relation between base and superstructure as an opposition (...), but rather as a continuous structure of social relations and forms with varying degrees of distance from the immediate processes of production and appropriation, beginning with those relations and forms that constitute the system of production itself. The connections between ‘base’ and ‘superstructure’ can then be traced without great conceptual leaps because they do not represent two essentially different and discontinuous orders of reality” (Wood, 1995, pp. 25–6).

over either the historical processes described as passive revolutions, or the notion of capitalism itself.

These theoretical assumptions are predicated on a structuralist reading of social relations in which some of them are seen as systemic and institutional pressures and some others as social disputes, imposing a limitation on the analytic power of class struggle. Narratives of passive revolution often overlook the contentious nature of class agency. While they acknowledge the agency of a ruling class in shaping the state and a hegemonic superstructure, they see that process as a response to systemic pressures resulting from the world order, or from the modes of production in play. In order to overcome the “[d]anger of historical defeatism, i.e. of indifferentism” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 114), it is crucial to see past the structural pressures and identify concrete historical agents and how their particular forms of social praxis interact with different ones¹⁵. Finally, their account of social agency and class struggle is also limited by their reading of ruling class agency. By treating passive revolution as a technique or means of statecraft (Hesketh, 2017, p. 401; Morton, 2010b, p. 12), there is an implication that it is a conscious strategy employed by ruling classes. In doing so, it overlooks how the modernising reforms that constitute a process of state-formation and/or passive revolution might be products of intense disputes between different classes, or even between different “fractions” of the ruling class (Poulantzas, 1978). Moreover, it overlooks the way in which the forms of statecraft can appear as unintended outcomes of other practices of social reproduction. In sum, their structuralist reading of class struggle raises issues about the way they use class, agency, and historical change.

All these issues are present in the most popular Neogramscian account of Brazilian state-formation as a series of passive revolutions, by Carlos Nelson Coutinho. According to his analysis:

“(…) instead of being the result of popular movements, that is, of a process led by a revolutionary bourgeoisie able to draw behind it the peasant-masses and the urban workers, capitalist transformation resulted from an understanding between sections of the classes that ruled the economy, leaving out the popular forces and making permanent use of the state’s apparatuses of repression and economic intervention. In this sense, all the concrete options with which Brazil was faced, either directly or indirectly connected with the transition to capitalism (from the political independence in 1822 until the coup of 1964, including the proclamation of the republic in 1889 and the Revolution of 1930) were chosen ‘from above’, that is, in a way that was elitist and anti-popular.” (Coutinho,

¹⁵ At this level, the difference in the way that Marx’s philosophy of praxis is developed by Gramsci and Lukacs becomes relevant, but such a digression would not be possible here (Gramsci, 1971; Lukacs, 1978).

2013, p. 175)

This account carries the assumption that these passive revolutions took place through “an understanding between sections of the classes that ruled the economy”, when both 1822 and 1889 were outcomes of intense moments of intra-ruling class struggle. Additionally, saying that all these transformations were “connected with the transition to capitalism” reveals a degree of historical teleology, in which these modernising passive revolutions aim towards the direction of Western capitalism. Both 1822 and 1889 are best understood through the perspectives of the actors involved in the making of those events – formal independence and the transition towards the Republic, respectively – rather than as stages in a broader transformation. In the empirical work developed in following chapters, I look at how these outcomes were produced through the social and geopolitical disputes in their respective contexts, and in both of them the concerns with a project of capitalist modernisation had little impact, especially in 1822.

In sum, Neogramscian IHS proposes a general model of historical change, consisting in the assumption of universal applicability of “passive revolution” as an explanatory category for non-European experiences. One possible solution for this issue consists of placing the notion of colonial difference at the centre of the social sciences, generating non-Eurocentric epistemologies. That argument is the core element of Decolonial Theory, discussed below.

Decolonial Theory – A Critique of Western Epistemology

While the literature on IR/IHS usually engages with “Postcolonial Theory” (Anievas and Nisancioglu, 2015, pp. 32–41; Rosenberg, 2016a, p. 132), I focus on “decolonial theory” as a different way of engaging with the colonial legacy that lies at the core of modernity, and of the social sciences themselves. For instance, Fanon (2008) frames his experience of blackness in the context of African decolonisation, and the most common reference points for postcolonial IR come from the Palestinian and Southern Asian experiences of British colonialism (Bhabha, 1984; Chakrabarty, 2000; Guha, 1997; Said, 2003; Spivak, 1999). On the other hand, the decolonial scholars trace the roots of coloniality back to the origins of the “colonial matrix of power”, between the 16th and 18th centuries, focusing therefore on the experiences of Latin America and the Caribbean. The intellectual history of both traditions is also

different. While postcolonial scholars draw from the rise of poststructuralism as a response to the pitfalls of Western Marxism, decolonial thought builds upon Dependency Theory and Wallerstein's modern world-system (Mignolo, 2011, pp. xxiii–xxxii).

The group of decolonial scholars¹⁶ draw extensively from the notion of “world-system” proposed by Wallerstein, adding to it a critique of the inherent colonial aspect within the idea of modernity. By emphasising modernity, Wallerstein ties the expansion of capitalism to the expansion of Western epistemology. By speaking of “modernity” rather than of “coloniality”, WST brings colonialism into the analysis as a consequence of European modernity, and not as its fundamental core and its “darker side” (Mignolo, 2002, pp. 59–61).

In order to appropriate the notion of the modern world-system, it is necessary for decolonial scholars to inscribe in it the notion that its modernity is an inherently colonial project, making it a “modern/colonial world-system”. The key theoretical step that allows such a move is the notion of “coloniality” proposed by Quijano (2007). The term refers to the fact that the creation of such system was only possible through acts of colonial violence that are not undone or washed away with the end of colonialism (i.e., direct political rule of the colony). It refers to the way in which the legacy of this colonial violence is reproduced the rationalist epistemology propagated by Renaissance discourses, according to which:

“(…) only European culture is rational, it can contain ‘subjects’ – the rest are not rational, they cannot be or harbour ‘subjects’. As a consequence, the other cultures are different in the sense that they are unequal, in fact inferior, by nature. They only can be ‘objects’ of knowledge or/and domination practices. From that perspective, the relation between European culture and the other cultures was established and has been maintained, as a relation between ‘subject’ and ‘object’. It blocked, therefore, every relation of communication, of interchange of knowledge and of modes of producing knowledge between the cultures, since the paradigm implies that between ‘subject’ and ‘object’ there can be but a relation of externality. Such a mental perspective, enduring as practice for five hundred years, could only have been the product of a relation of coloniality between Europe and the rest of the world.” (Quijano, 2007, p. 174)

The totalising notion of the “subject” of knowledge is denounced for being built upon a previous moment of violence constituted by the geopolitics of colonialism, and the erasure of otherness through the destruction of its cultural representations. The Cartesian ontology, the Kantian Enlightenment, and the Hegelian movement of world history from the East to the West – all of those necessarily follow from the geopolitical

¹⁶ I am referring broadly to the members of the collective modernity/coloniality, but I engage directly here with Walter Mignolo and Anibal Quijano.

domination of a periphery where “non-subjects”, with Reason at its “infancy”, can be found. In sum, the *ego cogito* is predicated upon an *ego conquiro*. The entire tradition of Western thought based upon an epistemology that revolves around the division between subject and object is attacked, as a predicate of the geopolitical extermination of otherness (Dussel, 1985, pp. 1–9, 1994, pp. 13–22).

Colonialism – or rather, the colonial difference – creates a geopolitical hierarchy between the different forms of knowledge. The dominant one, Western epistemology, is blind to that colonial gap, and for that very same reason is unable to overcome it. That is, if “knowledge” implies a power relation between the knowing subject and the known object, it is impossible to address coloniality while at the same time maintaining this divide. The decolonial alternative, therefore, is the proposition of a different conception of knowledge that is not built upon that division, but within it. That is, rather than being produced from the position of power held by the subject over the object, knowledge is reconstructed as something that rises from the difference between them. Walter Mignolo refers to this alternative through many names, including “border thinking”. According to him, the communication and the exchange between different cultures is only possible through a colonial semiosis, i.e., by identifying the tensions between the histories and knowledges produced at both sides of the colonial divide. The idea of “border thinking” proposes that in order to be decolonial, knowledge must be produced from a specific epistemic positionality: that is, in the border between these tensions. While Western epistemology is blind to the colonial difference, border thinking – decolonial knowledge – has it as its starting point (Mignolo, 2000, pp. 4–18, 2002, p. 85).

Since the core of their argument consists in denouncing the coloniality inherent in Western forms of knowledge as a core trait of modernity after the downfall of the direct political rule of colonialism, they reproduce the “system-maintenance bias” present in WST (Cox, 1981, p. 127). That is, by aiming their critique at the epistemological foundations of modernity, they focus on the underlying traits that have survived since 1492, they maintain an analytical bias towards continuity that underestimates or dismisses the relevance of historical change. This bias can be traced to many passages, the following one being a pristine example:

“Independence, in all the Americas including the US, ended external colonialism and replaced it with internal colonialism. (...) ‘Dependency’ did not vanish; it was simply restructured. This explains the distinction between ‘colonialism’ and ‘coloniality’. Colonialism has different historical and geographical locations. Coloniality is the underlying matrix of colonial power that was maintained, in the US and in South America

and the Caribbean, after independence. The colonial matrix of power remained in place; it only changed hands.” (Mignolo, 2005, pp. 68–9)

With that in mind, before proceeding to the historical assumptions present in their arguments that can be challenged by a social and geopolitical analysis of Brazilian state-formation, it is important to notice the way in which the argument proposed by Mignolo and Quijano makes use of social history and international politics. The notion of “geopolitics of knowledge” proposed by Mignolo evidences a global hierarchy of forms of knowledge centred around Western epistemology and the idea of “scientific knowledge”. The choice of words is not accidental, as this hierarchy, as argued by Quijano, has a distinctively geopolitical starting point: the establishment of “relations of domination between Europe and the Europeans and the rest of the regions and peoples of the world” (Quijano, 2008, p. 189). However, they do not provide a historical sociology of such domination. Instead, they largely rely on the narrative of systemic transformations provided by scholars like Wallerstein, Braudel, and Arrighi. Their eventual departures from this narrative are not motivated by different accounts of social history or geopolitics, but by intellectual histories of challenges to Western epistemology (in which the WST tradition is included). Even if they do not frame their arguments in the language of historical sociology, they present claims that contribute to understanding the historical process through which sovereign political entities are formed in Latin America – and in Brazil in particular – which is the core topic of this research.

The Historical Sociology of Coloniality

The historical narrative that informs the decolonial perspective is crucial, since its critique of Western epistemology is based on its initial moment of geopolitical domination. And, in such narrative of European expansion, especially towards America, WST still anchors most of the historical argument presented. They differ in establishing America, rather than Europe, as the privileged site for the birth of modernity. Since “modernity” names the processes that take place in the wake of the colonial encounter in America, the “modern world-system” is only possible as a framework of historical periodisation once America can serve as its birthplace (Quijano, 2008, p. 195). However, their narrative of colonial expansion and occupation does not differ significantly from that provided in WST.

Looking back at Wallerstein's account of the origin of the world-system we find that at the core of his argument lies an economic drive. Firstly, because Europe faced what essentially was a deficit in its trade balance with the "Arab world", increasing overall demand for precious metals and spices. Secondly (and according to Wallerstein, more importantly), there was also demand for essential items for the population as a whole: demand for food, clothing and wood – staples, rather than luxury – had increased in the aftermath of the crisis of feudalism as a result of both demographic and environmental reasons. In sum, a drive for expansion was felt in Europe as a whole, which was motivated by market mechanisms through the increased demand of many goods. Portugal was the starting point for this expansion across the Atlantic not only for its geographical advantage, but also for its geopolitical condition facing other European powers (Wallerstein, 1974, pp. 38–46). However, he concludes his argument with a warning:

“But ‘Europe’ must not be reified. There was no central agency which acted in terms of these long-range objectives. The real decisions were taken by groups of men acting in terms of their immediate interests. In the case of Portugal, there seemed to be advantage in the ‘discovery business’ for many groups – for the state, for the nobility, for the commercial bourgeoisie (indigenous and foreign), even for the semiproletariat of the towns.” (Wallerstein, 1974, p. 51)

The degree in which each of the groups mentioned benefitted from the discoveries and influenced their course is debatable, and that topic will be taken up later in this research. Returning to the historical narrative employed by decolonial scholars, it is interesting to note how, in building upon WST, they seem to go against the suggestion made by Wallerstein in the quote above.

When Quijano describes the imposition of European colonial dominance over the rest of the world he speaks of its formation as a function of the development of European capitalism. America is where all pre-existing forms of labour control are articulated together for the first time in history, and this is done “around and in the service of capital” (Quijano, 2008, p. 184). Contrary to what Wallerstein suggests, the colonial practices put in place are not analysed through the perspectives of groups acting in their immediate interest, but in terms of the general logic of capitalist development of the world-system:

“(…) the colonizers exercised diverse operations that brought about the configuration of a new universe of intersubjective relations of domination between Europe and the Europeans and the rest of the regions and peoples of the world, to whom new geocultural identities were being attributed in that process. In the first place, they expropriated the cultural discoveries of the colonized peoples most apt *for the development of capitalism to the profit of the European center*. Second, they repressed as much as possible the colonized forms of knowledge production, the models of the production of meaning, their

symbolic universe, the model of expression and of objectification and subjectivity. (...) Third, in different ways in each case, they forced the colonized to learn the dominant culture in any way that would be *useful to the reproduction of domination*" (Quijano, 2008, p. 189, italics added)

A similar issue arises when they describe the processes of formal independence in the beginning of the 19th century. To begin with, by understanding state-formation as a process necessarily tied to nationalism (conceiving statehood necessarily through the idea of the "modern nation-state"), Quijano often relapses into an idealised version of European history that he strongly criticises himself. And, like above, this is done through sweeping historical generalisations disconnected from social history. The nationalisation of societies is understood as a process of democratization, achieved through homogenizing its individual members in the creation of a sense of community. This creation of a national identity is strongly based on the historical experience of the French Revolution, and among the "successful nationalization of societies and states in Europe (...) there is no known exception to this historical trajectory of the process that drives the formation of the nation-state" (Quijano, 2008, pp. 206–8).

On the other hand, the process takes place differently in America because of the very experience of colonialism. In some cases (Brazil included), the nation was an impossibility, as the colonial conditions that made the colonial elite dependent on the capitalist market also made it have more interests in common with the European bourgeoisie than with its respective black and native population. Therefore, in such cases, the formation of states without the decolonisation of society (i.e., the production of a homogenous population united behind a national identity) could not lead to a modern nation-state, being instead a "rearticulation of the coloniality of power over new institutional bases" (Quijano, 2008, pp. 214–5). In this formulation, the bias toward systemic reproduction that exists in WST continues to appear. Without the decolonisation of society, the formation of states is merely a rearticulation of that pre-existing system of colonial power.

What is the extent of such rearticulation? Again, the answer does not depart much from that of Wallerstein. In his version, the world-system goes through a transformation in late 18th and early 19th century that corresponds to an hegemonic transition (Arrighi, 1994; Wallerstein, 1989). The history of Brazilian independence, in particular, is told through the competition between James Monroe and George Canning over influence in the Americas in the aftermath of the Congress of Vienna (Wallerstein, 1989, pp. 254–5). Mignolo makes very similar claims. For him, the

crucial element in situating these recently independent states in the modern/colonial order was the French idea of “Latin America”. According to him:

“The idea of ‘Latin’ America that came into view in the second half of the 19th century depended in varying degrees on a idea of ‘Latinidad’ – ‘Latinity’, *Latinité* – that was being advanced by France. ‘Latinidad’ was precisely the ideology under which the identity of the ex-Spanish and ex-Portuguese colonies was located (by natives as well as by Europeans) in the new global, modern/colonial world order. When the idea of ‘Latinidad’ was launched it had a particular purpose within European imperial conflicts and a particular function in redrawing the imperial difference. In the 16th century, Las Casas contributed to drawing the imperial difference by distinguishing Christians from the Ottoman Empire. By the 19th century the imperial difference had moved north, to distinguish between states that were all Christian and capitalist. In the Iberian ex-colonies, the ‘idea’ of Latin America emerged as a consequence of conflicts between imperial nations; it was needed by France to justify its civilizing mission in the South and its overt conflict with the US for influence in that area.” (Mignolo, 2005, p. 58)

That is, he repeats the move by WST of placing the driving force behind Latin American geopolitics not in the disputes involving the elites and working classes in both sides of the Atlantic, but in struggles for hegemony within the system’s core. In both of them, the local elites appear, at best, as simply stepping up in a moment where a break in the system’s structure allows them to act. At worst, they were simply acting on behalf of political struggles in the core: either through the French idea of “latinidad” (for Mignolo) or under British economic dominance (for Wallerstein).

Therefore, although it offers important avenues towards a critique of Eurocentric epistemology, Decolonial Theory is still largely built upon a historical sociology provided by WST. In doing so, they repeat its bias towards systemic maintenance, and remove social history from their accounts of colonialism and state-formation.

State-Formation Within the Brazilian Tradition of IR

The traditional narrative about the history of Brazilian foreign policy divides the period analysed in this thesis in three moments. Firstly, the westward expansion beyond the Tordesillas line in the colonial period that creates a conflict between Portuguese and Spanish colonial forces in America. Secondly, the process of Brazilian independence from Portugal and the negotiations around international recognition that take most of the First Empire. Thirdly, a period of “independent foreign policy” that covers the Second Empire and the Old Republic, that is, from the end of the unequal treaties with Britain in 1847 until the 1930s. Through this chronology, two topics are particularly revealing: the Brazilian policy within the continent, especially in relation

to the border disputes in which it was involved, and the analysis of the process of independence, which is judged by the degree of autonomy held by Brazilian foreign policy in relation to more powerful states (Cervo, 2008; Cervo and Bueno, 2008; Moniz Bandeira, 2012).

Brazilian IR scholars trace the geopolitics of the region back to the expansion of the Portuguese colonial occupation towards the West, which is explained through many factors, such as the expansion of agriculture, the desire of the Portuguese crown to find routes to the Andean mines, and the capture of the native population for enslavement (Moniz Bandeira, 2012, pp. 37–42). The conflicts created as a consequence of this expansion are treated as outcomes of the geopolitical interests of the respective colonial powers, at first, and, after the independences, of the new states. Even if the interference of European powers is treated differently in each of the region's conflicts during the 19th century, the “national interests” that motivate these conflicts are associated with the strategic value of the disputed territories, which comes from the economic importance attributed to them. According to this tradition, it is the national interests of the states in the region, understood in such a way, which explain their conflicts, from the earlier disputes around the Río de la Plata basin (Moniz Bandeira, 2012, pp. 49–57) to the Paraguayan war (Doratioto, 2002, 2014). This evidences two problems in their conceptual framework: their rigid notion of “national interest”, and its roots in a classic understanding of geopolitics.

Besides the narratives presented by this literature about the conflicts in the region, this rigid conception of national interest is also evidenced by the main account presented in Brazilian IR about the process through which independence and international recognition are obtained in the 1820s (Cervo, 2008; Cervo and Bueno, 2008). According to that, Brazilian foreign policy at the time presented a “limited perception of the national interest” (Cervo and Bueno, 2008, p. 26): the concessions to Portugal (the reparations) and to England (the treaties of 1826 and 1827) were unnecessary, since the dispute between Britain and the Holy Alliance could be used in favour of the recognition, without sacrificing the national interest by conceding these trade advantages that created the long tradition of dependency in Brazil. Indeed, according to these scholars, the unequal situation in which Brazil would find itself in relation to European powers has its origins not in colonial patterns of trade, production and social relations, but in a poorly thought foreign policy in the 1820s (Cervo and Bueno, 2008, pp. 24–45). Not only this misrepresents the history and origins of

colonial relations, it does so by neglecting taking into account the social legacies of colonialism within Brazilian society. In doing so, it isolates the understanding of foreign policy from the broader social processes around the construction and legitimization of the state itself, and creates a standard of evaluation for these foreign policies under analysis purely by comparing them against their notion of “national interest”, to which we now turn.

The first problem that is presented through this use of “national interest” relates to the anachronistic way in which it is used in the analysis. Rather than seeing the dispute between actors and social forces in the 1820s around the very definition of the “Brazilian national interest” as a historical process, this narrative simply declares, that the regional landowning elites represented the “national interest” and that, in diverging from that, the diplomacy of recognition during the First Empire was adopted a mistaken strategy, therefore “weakening the national interest” (Cervo and Bueno, 2008, p. 37). The second problem is precisely how this notion is anchored in a classic conception of geopolitics that limits it to the disputes between great powers competing for strategic territory and resources in order to maximise their own power. As Cervo and Bueno make clear, from the nineteenth century onwards, foreign policy needs to be aimed at maximising capitalist accumulation:

“Both the Concert of Europe and the system of balance that followed (...) served the interests of industrial capitalism more than any other cause (...). Production for international trade, according to Adam Smith, had to be the main concern of a capitalist economy. Indeed, this will be, from Pitt onwards, the essential rule of British foreign policy. Other nations will follow suit, either by imitation or necessity, as their own domestic economic modernisation advances.” (Cervo and Bueno, 2008, p. 18)

In sum, this evidences what is essentially a Realist ontology of IR, in which the necessity to compete in the realm of capitalist accumulation plays the role of the driving force of geopolitics, or the immediate cause for the anarchical dispute between great powers for their survival in the international arena. By reinforcing this limited notion of geopolitics, this tradition misses the social construction of foreign policy, and ultimately, of states, as well as a whole range of other geopolitical issues (in a broader sense) that are not represented through diplomatic relations between sovereign states. In the specific case of its narrative about Brazilian state-formation, the peculiarity of Brazil’s formal independence and international recognition is not given enough attention because the competing social forces and geopolitical strategies that dispute the outcomes of that process are neglected, in favour of a reductionist narrative around the “national interest”. This same movement also affects the dispute that

occurred since the relocation of the court from Lisbon to Rio de Janeiro between Brazilian and Portuguese elites for the control of the state. Even though the latter is initially welcomed by the former for effectively bringing an end to Portuguese mercantilist privileges and allowing direct trade with Britain, their interests would soon clash during that process of recognition. However, rather than accounting for this conflict through the differing social practices of reproduction and geopolitical strategies of each of these groups, it portrays the landowning Brazilian elites as those who were true to that “national interest”, attempting to “by foreign policy means, eradicate the conditions of dependency, protect the manufactures, and stimulate their growth through investment and through the creation of an internal market for commodities” (Cervo and Bueno, 2008, p. 22), effectively misrepresenting the interests and practices of these elites, as well as their ties to foreign trade and slave labour. On the other hand, rather than being held as a competing social force in the dispute for the state and its processes of policy-making, the Portuguese aristocracy (and, in effect, the official diplomacy of the First Empire) is simply represented as the continuity of the submissive colonial foreign policy, bowing unnecessarily to European interests and weakening the “national interest” in doing so (Cervo, 2008; Cervo and Bueno, 2008, p. 37)

Conclusion

The existing theories of IR and IHS in which we can find accounts of state-formation in Latin America and Brazil fail to foreground the trajectory of the social and geopolitical disputes that shape its history. They either make theoretical assumptions that fit the general argument through which they explain the world, or are selective as to the extent in which they “let history in”. As a result, if we frame the processes of colonialism and state-formation in the terms of the disputes in which concrete historical actors find themselves in order to understand how they justified the adoption of those given practices in that context, something in that history will appear surprising to all of those theories.

Taking firstly the case of the normative accounts of state-formation found in scholars associated with or that draw significantly from the English School or Wendtian Constructivism, they share an analytical perspective that takes the state as the starting point of international politics. Their narratives of state-formation assume

the existence of a “national interest” even before the state formally comes into being. It also assumes, in the case of Latin American states, that this interest will aim towards some kind of “modernisation”, understood as becoming a full member of the community of “civilised” states.

Second, in the case of Marxist accounts of IR/IHS, the emphasis on the expansion of capitalism generates a structural bias that appears in different ways. Some identify a capitalist system whose structural transformations generate different political (superstructural) forms, as is the case in WST. Others, like Neogramscian scholars and some within the UCD tradition, understand state-formation as a part of a revolutionary moment captured under the notion of either a “bourgeois revolution” and, when that fails, as elite-led reforms framed as “passive revolutions”, which results in the excessive stretching of such concepts to include all sorts of historical transformations.

Thirdly, while the critique of Decolonial Theory correctly denounces the inherent colonial aspects in those societies that are maintained throughout their state-formation processes, it does so from a historical account of colonialism that draws excessively on WST. Therefore, it fails to account for the geopolitics of colonialism, that is, for the disputes between the colonial agendas of different European powers, and even for the different ways in which different social actors reaped their benefits from the colonial project between the 16th and 18th centuries. And during the 19th century, the narrative of state-formation is given only marginal relevance in face of the continuity of colonial modernity in those societies.

It could be argued that these issues can be solved simply by “adding more history” to any of those accounts. After all, in order to account for the specificity of a particular case, it is often necessary to abandon the general aspects of a theoretical argument. In that case, the incompatibilities between that specificity and the general argument are explained as an “exception”, that is, as a minor deviation from the historical norm (however it is defined), or through the adoption of “semi-” concepts (such as “semifeudal”).

This is not the route taken by this study. In order to overcome the contradictions between historical specificity and the general theory, the alternative suggested in this thesis is to reassess the role of theory in social analysis. Instead of having grand explanations that aim at explaining as much as possible while at the same time making efforts to reduce its analytical components and simply “add more history” to it in a

later moment, I aim to provide a theoretical framework that does not provide universal laws and general explanations, but that creates a guideline for looking for those answers in the disputes between social actors in a given context. In short, rather than pre-judging and reifying historical outcomes, theory should provide a methodology for historical analysis. The construction of such a framework is the object of the next chapter.

Chapter 2 – Class, Agency and Geopolitics: The Political Marxist Tradition in International Relations

“The history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggle”

(Marx and Engels, 1969, p. 14)

Introduction

Existing theories of IR/IHS provide an account of Brazilian state-formation with a variety of theoretical assumptions that fail to account for the particularities of Brazilian history. The social and geopolitical practices that shaped Portuguese colonialism, the disputes that resulted in Brazilian formal independence, the struggles between Portuguese and Brazilian classes within the colony, and those between them and the British informal empire across the 19th century all fall through the cracks of explanatory theory. The previous chapter argued that theoretical assumptions play crucial roles in the narratives provided by the main accounts of Brazilian (and broadly Latin American, in some cases) state-formation, where their accounts depart from the historical experience of those societies.

The English School, Marxism (WST, UCD and Neogramscianism) and Decolonial Theory share a style of reasoning that resembles that of a *ceteris paribus* clause: they use such assumptions to reduce the historical register to one of its aspects, used as the starting point and main guideline of theoretical explanation, while other elements that constitute that historical case are kept to the background, and held as either constant, or untheorizable. For the English School and some Constructivists, the existence of a sovereign unity with a given “national interest” that define its identity among the rest of the society of states creates obstacles to the explanation of how such a sovereign entity is created in the first place, and of what are the social and geopolitical forces that shape its operation. Marxists of the different variations discussed before understand the formation of peripheral states through the pressures of “laws of motion” of given structural elements of social life, such as the logic of the capitalist world-system, or the fact of international multiplicity. All historical change is then understood as illustration or confirmation of a proclaimed overarching logic. For Decolonial Theory, the significance of the historical transformations in Latin

American and Brazilian history are minimised, as none of them alter the colonial condition of the world system.

The central question that stands, then, is how can a theory of IR/IHS aimed at explaining the process of state-formation in Brazil account for that historical specificity? How can the historical experience of concrete social disputes in both sides of the Atlantic be the starting point of a theory that does not reduce it to an outcome of some broader structural logic, but acknowledges the open-ended character of said disputes? This is also a question about the role of agency. If state-formation is explained by overarching processes such as capitalism or colonialism, then what is the role of the actions of concrete historical subjects involved in the making of said processes? How relevant are the strategies devised by the Brazilian elite itself? Or by the Portuguese aristocracy? In order to overcome the challenge of Eurocentrism in IR/IHS, it is imperative to acknowledge the role of the concrete practices of non-European agents in the making of their histories.

These questions imply a need for radically inscribing history and the method of historicism into our conception of theory as method¹⁷, and for taking the analysis of (often unintended) outcomes of conflicts between contextualised agencies as the core methodological guidelines. Among the theories within IR and IHS, Political Marxism (PM), I will argue, holds the best promise to provide the agency-centred historicism required by the set of questions at hand. This chapter will look at the premises of PM, identifying some of its internal tensions and working upon those to offer a contribution to its understanding of the relation between class conflict and international politics. Such a contribution is twofold. Firstly, it rethinks the notion of geopolitics, grounding it in contested social relations in a way that allows it to overcome the internal/external (or domestic/international) dichotomy while moving away from reductionism and economism. Secondly, by grounding the notion of agency in Marxist conception of praxis, it places the categories of class and class struggle at the core of the analysis. The historical construction of political institutions, forms of social relations, and territorialities becomes the core element of analysis. It allows us to progress from the general statement that social relations produce particular forms of territoriality and

¹⁷ In other words, history is not the collection of “facts” from which we can create general abstractions that establish patterns in order to be able to “explain” other sets of “historical facts”. Instead, it is to reframe the role of theory as a methodological guide for the construction of historical narratives that explain particular outcomes.

inter-spatial relations, to a study of how exactly it happens. The legal and political design of such institutions is not only itself shaped by the political strategies of spatialisation and reproduction of actors involved in its making, but also translates these same strategies into a process of “geopolicy making”.

The argument has clear implications for key debates in IR/IHS. The main one for the purposes of this thesis is that of the relation between social relations, the state, and geopolitics, commonly framed around the notion of a “relative autonomy” between them. The PM contribution to that issue comes as a reframing of such “autonomy”. It is not an autonomy between structural levels, as in the Althusserian and Poulantzian formulation of the term (Wood, 1995, pp. 50–9). Instead, I suggest to conceive of different agencies which inform each other, having different means of access to political structures (property, the state, the inter-state relations). The connection between class agency and geopolitics is then not seen as a functionalist and unidirectional one in which the latter is reduced to the former. It is also not seen as a co-determination between separate spheres of social reality. It is reframed to include the interaction between practices of foreign policy as a form of political contestation that has consequences for both the political dispute for control over the state and its corresponding “national interest”, and for struggles around social property relations. Consequently, the term “geopolitics” itself becomes less helpful, as the idea of a “separate structural level” is being avoided. Rather, a move towards “geopolicies” is suggested to highlight the multiplicity of mutually contested practices of territoriality (including but not limited to foreign policy) based on – and feeding back into – strategies of spatialisation linked to historically concrete agents.

The next section will revisit the core PM argument to identify the roots of a theory of geopolitics in the social-property relations approach. It tracks the development of the PM approach through its application by IR scholars, and assess how it can be further enhanced through the study of a non-European case of state-formation. Section three will consist of an excursus, providing a philosophical foundation for the agency-centred historicism proposed here in Marx’s critique of Hegelian philosophy of history and in the philosophy of praxis tradition and discussing the role of the state in a historical analysis driven by class struggle. Section four will identify the three main ways in which the challenge of Eurocentrism is posed in IR/HIS, exploring how the development of such a historicist framework contributes to overcoming them. Section five will relate this framework back to the historical

analysis of Brazilian state-formation, providing a layout for the historical narrative in the three remaining chapters that follow, and pointing at the historical and theoretical gains of such a study.

The Tradition of Political Marxism in Historical Sociology

Geopolitics in Brenner and Wood

The tradition of Political Marxism carries in its core a latent claim about geopolitics since its origin in the first Brenner debate. His original argument hinged on an alternative notion of capitalism, derived from concrete property relations – that is, the way in which a portion of the product is extracted from the direct producers by another class (Brenner, 1985b, p. 11). If the rise of capitalism is based on a separation between the “political” definition and defence of property rights, and the “economic” use of one’s property (Brenner, 1985a, p. 299), it necessarily entails not only a different social balance of class forces, but also a particular political structure – the state – to legitimate and uphold the particularly capitalist notion of property rights. Yet, a correlation between property relations and geopolitics would only be pursued later, in the work of Ellen Wood, starting with the differentiation between the notions of sovereignty that are in play in the British and French contexts (Wood, 1991, 1995, 2002a) and evolving towards an analysis of “imperial forms” (2003). When PM encounters the discipline of IR, however, the resignification of geopolitics as social relations is further radicalised.

While that first generation of Political Marxists (i.e., Brenner and Wood) identified the roots of geopolitics in class struggle, they did not explicitly develop the category of geopolitics beyond the traditional: a sphere of social reality demarcated by the patterns of conflict and alliances between great powers (and other actors) in the inter-state system. This is a direct result of the subsidiary role played by geopolitics in their theoretical apparatus: it appeared as a reflection of social-property relations, to the point of a direct relation being established between different types of social order and their respective “imperial forms” (Wood, 2003). The relation between geopolitics and class struggle is not explored in full extent, leaving a deterministic reading of the former through the latter.

For these early PM scholars – Brenner and Wood – geopolitics appears then as a distinct sphere of social reality, operating in subordination to the social property relations in each society. The alternative I suggest – building from the previous uses of PM in IR – is to redefine geopolitics not as an outcome of social property relations and the way they are mediated by political structures, but as an integral part of them. That is, geopolitics should not be reduced to international politics. Instead, the redefinition I suggest encompasses the disputes around the social production of space and the creation of political institutions based on territorial authority. I argue that these disputes around spatialisation should be understood as an essential component of class struggle. In this sense, the “social” and the “geopolitical” become inseparable (but not identical)¹⁸. The theoretical elaboration of such a redefinition of geopolitics is the goal of this chapter, and its next step takes place in the development of PM in the discipline of IR.

PM in IR: Historicising the States-System

I will proceed with an analysis of Benno Teschke’s earlier work, focusing on his argument about the rise of political multiplicity in the form of the “Westphalian” states-system (Teschke, 1998, 2002, 2009). When elaborating his theoretical argument, it becomes clear that his line of reasoning does not consist of firstly establishing patterns of class relations to only in a later moment establish a connection between those and their respective forms of international system. Instead, he writes to find the roots of these systems directly in “class strategies of reproduction, both within polities and between them” (Teschke, 2009, p. 47). In order to explain how the European social realm came to a point in which “domestic” and “international” (as well as “state” and “market”) were separated, he traces the formation of multiple political sovereign entities back to the dissolution of the Carolingian Empire. More

¹⁸ This argument might seem contradictory with the core claim in PM about the “separation of the ‘economic’ and the ‘political’”. The PM claim states that the institutional differentiation is part of what constitutes the historical specificity of capitalism, and Marx’s critique of bourgeois political economy was “intended to reveal the political face of the economy”. That is, the point is to “understand exactly what it is in the historical nature of capitalism that appears as a differentiation of ‘spheres’”, precisely by “re-examining the historical conditions that made such conceptions [of ‘economic’ and ‘political’] possible and plausible” (Wood, 1995, pp. 19–20). The redefinition that I propose here aims to move away from the notion of geopolitics as a “sub-sphere” within the political one. Instead, it expands it to include practices of spatialisation not only from both “spheres”, but that are themselves constitutive of that institutional differentiation of which “state-formation” is a crucial component.

specifically, to the outcomes of intra-ruling class disputes that shaped the different trajectories of European state-formation (Teschke, 2009, pp. 73–4, 109–111).

In doing so, he is breaking with the centrality of the state as the explanatory unit for geopolitics. Since what needs to be explained is precisely their existence in multiplicity, the goal is to provide a social theory of historical change that can demonstrate how social property relations also constitute politico-juridical forms of territorial authority. Teschke provides that account by analysing the varying forms of authoritative claims over land (the connection between property and sovereignty), and the ways in which social actors relate to those claims in the struggle between their contrasting strategies of reproduction. By framing the issue of structure and agency in these terms they become not only immersed in historical specificity, but also establish the intrinsic relation between military and political questions and the strategies of reproduction of particular sets of social subjectivity (Teschke, 2009, p. 272). Later in this chapter this point will be taken further, demonstrating how in this social conception of geopolitics the state plays a role of a “material force” that conditions the interaction between social agents (Wood, 1995, p. 26).

The emphasis on historical specificity through the contextualization of agencies and genealogical understanding of subjects is the core of what he calls “radical historicism” (Teschke, 2005, p. 7, 2014, pp. 41–45; Teschke and Cemgil, 2014, p. 615). This “genealogical understanding of subjects” in Political Marxism, however, still needs to be developed in more detail, and will be discussed at length later in this chapter. So far, the argument for historical specificity has been built mostly around the structure-agency debate. In Teschke’s work, the rejection of a *via media* solution to that issue is made clear, and the adoption of a radically agency-centred perspective becomes the theoretical device that frames history as the cornerstone of theory-making:

“The theory of social property relations not only explains geopolitical conduct, it can theorize the constitution and transformation of geopolitical orders (...). But it shows that these systemic transformations are always bound up with profound social conflicts that reorganize both the relations of domination and exploitation *and* the relations between the internal and the external – the domestic and the international. The relation between structure and agency is not a repetitive and recursive cycle in which structure determines agency and agency re-enacts structure. (...) It is clear too that these transformations do not follow a schematic succession, but are highly uneven, socially, geographically, and chronologically. They do not follow a transcendent telos, but they are retrospectively understandable. History is not only dynamic, it is also cumulative. Traces of the past have to be accommodated in a reorganized present. The old and the new fuse in unforeseen ways. Structure and agency, necessity and freedom, combine in different ways, both domestically and internationally. This is a world of our making, but this making is neither the aggregate of voluntary and intentional actions, nor the outcome of desubjectified

mechanisms of structural emergence. This is not a process of structuration, but of dialectical development.” (Teschke, 2009, p. 273)

However, the quote above reveals one fundamental tension in Teschke’s (early) work. While the idea of “cumulative history” is the basis of the argument made here: about a radically historicist response to the agency-structure question, this seems contradictory with the opening line, according to which the “theory of social property relations (...) explains geopolitical conduct” and can “theorize the constitution and transformation of geopolitical orders”. If the “old and the new” constantly “fuse in unforeseen ways”, it follows that the role of theory cannot be to “explain” conducts. Similarly, geopolitical orders must be explained not through theoretical models, but through their genealogy, that is, through their contested process of becoming. The role of the “theory of social property relations” is not to explain a historical context, but to provide a method of historical analysis through which the *differentia specifica* of any given object might be located through its specific process of formation.

This tension between theory as structural explanation and theory as historicist method is present in PM since Brenner’s early work. Brenner and Wood use a historicist method (based mostly on comparative history) to show the origins of capitalism and the development of modern sovereignty (Brenner, 1985b, 1985a, Wood, 1991, 2002a, 2002b), but they apply that in order to elaborate an explanatory theory. Teschke repeats that process in a first moment (only moving fully towards “radical historicism” in later works), but he tackles another issue left untouched by that first generation of PM scholars: the assumption of pre-existing national borders as a given¹⁹.

Teschke’s early work sets itself the task of explaining what Wood and Brenner (and most of the discipline of IR) take for granted: the division between “domestic” and “international”. He then demonstrates how the realm of the “international” is tied to a historical period in which the modern notion of “sovereignty” was forged as an outcome of vertical and horizontal class struggle. It becomes important to differentiate between a modern form of sovereignty tied to the spatial practices of capitalist Britain from late 17th century onwards from a pre-modern one, which absolutist regimes kept

¹⁹ Although their analysis is not contained within them. This is not the same as the critique of internalism or “methodological nationalism” commonly directed at these early PM scholars (Anievas and Nisancioglu, 2015; Blaut, 2000; Davidson, 2012), as I am not saying they fail to take into account “external” factors. Rather, the point is precisely that social reality already appears in their work with a division between “inside” and “outside” which is not problematized.

in practice in continental Europe. Absolutist sovereignty is held as premodern, as it does not leave the remit of the feudal practice of “geopolitical accumulation”. Since the social-property relations that are constitutive of feudalism are based upon the need for coercion of direct producers²⁰, the most common lordly strategies of accumulation involved precisely expanding the extent of land over which one could enforce their own authority²¹ (Teschke, 2009, pp. 95–115, 220–1). In Britain (or more specifically, in England) on the other hand, the transition to capitalism brought to power a new ruling class, whose international disputes against a premodern absolutist aristocracy are the cornerstone of political struggle during the 17th century. The transition to capitalism, the transformation it implies in the British state and its practices of foreign policy cannot be abstracted from each other. Rather than seeing a transition to capitalism triggering a transition towards a capitalist form of sovereignty or geopolitics, Teschke traces a particular set of geopolitical practices back to capitalist social-property relations and strategies of accumulation. The rise of modern sovereignty can only be understood through the result of the dispute between these practices and those of absolutist elites based on geopolitical strategies of accumulation for the control of the British state through the 17th century (Teschke, 2009, pp. 252–3).

In sum, by reframing geopolitics in a way that class struggle becomes its analytical cornerstone, Political Marxism provides a valuable contribution to IR theory in tracing the social origins of the modern conception of “international”. This is not to say that there is no such general abstraction as the “international”, but that any form of “international” can only be understood through its historical specificity and not as a transhistorical abstraction (Bull, 1977; Morgenthau, 1948; Rosenberg, 2006, 2013, 2016a). For the same reason, it also cannot be held as a “reductionist” or “internalist” theory in which the “domestic” explains the “international”, as one central research problem was precisely to account for the historical emergence of the differentiation between an “inside” from an “outside”, or “the domestic” from “the international” as the institutional geopolitical form of multiple sovereign jurisdictions. The social-property approach provides a methodology for international historical sociology that

²⁰ For a detailed exposition of the Political Marxist argument about the separation between the political and the economic, see Wood (1995, 2002a).

²¹ Which does not assume that innovation is impossible under feudalism, or that productivity levels cannot increase. See Brenner (1985b)

is centred around historical specificity and agency, that applies not only for the modern states-system:

“The implications of the social-property approach for the discipline of IR extend far beyond the Middle Ages. It is applicable to all geopolitical orders, be they tribal, feudal, absolutist, or capitalist. In each case, a definite set of property relations generates specific geopolitical authority relations governing and setting limits to inter-actor rationalities. I thus aspire not simply to trace the correspondence between property relations and international systems, but to uncover the dynamics of these systems in class strategies of reproduction, both within polities and between them. Property relations explain institutional structures, conditioning the conflictual relations of appropriation that explain change. (...) Thus, I propose a starting point for a theory of large-scale geopolitical transformation.”(Teschke, 2009, p. 47)

And here the tension between structuralism and historicism appears once again. Even though the theory described consists purely of a method of historical analysis, it seems to revert to an explanatory formulation near the end. While I accept that social property relations condition the conflicts around appropriation and can provide the “starting point for a theory of large-scale geopolitical transformation”, it cannot be said that they explain institutional structures. Instead, the explanation must come from the concrete practices employed by actors in their contested enactment, reproduction, and contestation of institutional structures rather than from those structures themselves. The analysis of such practices is further developed by Hannes Lacher through the notion of “strategies of spatialization”.

PM in IR: “Strategies of Spatialization”

At this point, the social-property approach is faced with a problem of political geography. If geopolitics must be understood through class struggle, then how exactly are the politics of the latter translated into geopolitics? In other words, how exactly are notions of spatiality (or even space itself) produced through the contestation of class strategies of reproduction? The answer to these questions, as I argue, cannot be simply derived from any given set of property relations (or from a mode of production). Instead, it must come from a historicised account of the practices employed by actors to respond to the political context in which they find themselves. More specifically, from the particular ways in which such practices involve the social production of space.

These questions appear more clearly in the thought of Hannes Lacher (2003, 2006), when developing a critique of Globalization Theory and state-centrism from the perspective of Political Marxism. In order to articulate the forms of territoriality

arising from the modern form of national sovereignty and the global capitalist markets, he draws upon a tradition of political geography that relies on the core claim that

“Social relations, which are concrete abstractions, have no real existence save in and through space. *Their underpinning is spatial.* In each particular case, the connection between this underpinning and the relations it supports calls for analysis. Such an analysis must imply and explain a genesis and constitute a critique of those institutions, substitutions, transpositions, metaphorizations, anaphorizations, and so forth, that have transformed the space under consideration.” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 404, italics in the original)

An important conclusion drawn from that central assumption is that the territorial forms encountered in any context will not be simply “global”, to be contrasted with “local” or “national” alternatives. To do so would imply the assumption that “global” and its alternatives have fixed meanings and purposes throughout history. Instead, what can be found in history are contextually specific articulations between “global” and “local” (and “regional”, “national”, and so on) in a multi-layered territorial grid of particular forms of accumulation and territorial organization (Brenner, 1997).

Against this background, Lacher makes an important contribution to PM’s social-property approach to geopolitics. Drawing from this particular tradition of political geography discussed above, he counters the notion that presents capitalism as an inherently “global” tendency that rises as a “post-Westphalian” order destined to make the national states and their bounded forms of territorial sovereignty obsolete. Lacher turns the PM argument against the teleological readings of history that posit capitalism as a necessity into a critique of the idea of globalization as a structural necessity of capital against the territorially bounded authority of states. Instead, as argued by him and Teschke, the rise of capitalism takes place in a context in which the pre-existing configuration of European political geography already had the form of a multiplicity of states. In this sense, there is no necessary causal relation between capitalism and the states-system. The interaction between them is subject to infinite variations, resulting in historical construction of many context-specific political geographies. Even more, the notions of “global” and “(inter)national” cannot be permanently ascribed to “capital” and “state”, but are themselves the product of the interaction between the ways in which class strategies are translated into territorial practices (Lacher, 2003, p. 534). Since the “global” and “national” tendencies cannot be abstracted as historical constants, they must be understood through the

particularities in which they appear in each context. In Lacher's words, they must be understood through the "spatialization strategies" of particular actors:

"(...) it is necessary to move beyond the dichotomy of 'national/international and global' as if they were successive stages of modern social organization. Instead, we have to look at the changing *spatialization strategies* of states, classes and firms, which structure successive historical epochs. These spatialization strategies may be understood as different ways of dealing with the fundamental tensions and problems which the territorial non-coincidence of capitalist statehood and world economy poses to actors, whether political, social or economic. The *dialectic* of nationalization and globalization, of the territorialized and the de-territorialized preconditions for the reproduction and expansion of the capital relations, thus has to become the focus of IR/IPE." (Lacher, 2006, p. 121, italics in the original)

This notion of "spatialization strategies" presented by Lacher is crucial, as it provides the analytical tool through which geopolitics – that is, the disputes around the social production (and control) of space – can be conceptualised as a key element of social disputes, rather than as a superstructural consequence of their economic base. It parts way with economic determinism by highlighting the way in which political institutions themselves – and, as I argue, their territorial aspect – are the object of class struggle, hence the name *Political Marxism*²².

My argument here is to take the idea of strategies of spatialisation proposed by Lacher even further, singling it out as the key to ground geopolitics in social relations without the structurally reductionist sense of ascribing "modes of geopolitics" as derivations of logically-deduced spatial imperatives of modes of production. By bringing the territorial aspect of social disputes to the fore, the juridical-political forms of territorial authority are themselves understood as outcomes and objects of those disputes, as shown in Teschke's argument about the historical origins of the states-system. It follows that, if the creation of every instance of juridical-political territorial authority is shaped by contextualised social agency, the same can be said of the interactions between these territorial authorities. The outcome of disputes between contrasting territorial practices of social actors capable of influencing the policy-making of a given state (even if "from below", or from "outside") and the way in which that outcome is mediated through the particular institutional form of the state in

²² There is some similarity between this formulation and the "strategic-relational approach" proposed by Bob Jessop (2008, 2015). A detailed engagement with Jessop's SRA and state theory at large falls beyond the scope of the present work. It should suffice to note that SRA and the PM approach the issue of the state from different perspectives. While Jessop refines abstract categories of state theory by building upon Poulantzian structuralism, the PM historicist tradition emphasises the genealogies of particular state-formation processes from a class struggle perspective, embracing Wood's critique of Poulantzas and Althusser (Wood, 1995).

question is what constitutes its practices of foreign policy. For this reason, given this interactive, mutually constitutive, and socially grounded conception of foreign policy, it is important to move away from the analysis of “modes of geopolitics”, and towards the genealogical constitution of *geopolicies* (Teschke, forthcoming).

In other words, the goal is to move away from the idea of “geopolitics” as a “sub-sphere” within the “political”, understood in the limited sense of territorial disputes between great powers. Instead, the argument made here promotes a wider use of the term that refers to the social production of space as an aspect of human relations. The notion of spatialisation strategies provided by Lacher is what allows the historicist agency-centred methodology employed by this PM literature to establish a connection between social practices of reproduction and the territorial forms that they promote. In this sense, rather than speaking of “geopolitics” as the encounter of the different actors and their territorial practices (as that would signal its reification as a “separate sphere”), it becomes more productive to refer to practices of reproduction predicated on the establishment and enforcement of particular territorial orders as *geopolicies*, and to analyse the genealogy of such practices through the methodological commitments to agency and historicism proposed here.

This line of reasoning follows a PM conception of historical materialism that, as argued, breaks with the base/superstructure dichotomy and with structuralist economic determinism through an agency-centred and radically historicist conception of class struggle. As formulated by Wood,

“A materialist understanding of the world, then, is an understanding of the social activity and the social relations through which human beings interact with nature in producing the conditions of life; and it is a historical understanding which acknowledges that *the products of social activity, the forms of social interaction produced by human beings, themselves become material forces, no less than are natural givens.*” (Wood, 1995, p. 26, italics added)

There is a tension between this formulation of the structure-agency question in Wood and the way in which Lacher presented the notion of strategies of spatialisation. If “states” and “firms” (mentioned in Lacher’s quote above as enacting spatialisation strategies of their own) are seen as products of class struggle, that is, as “products of social activity”, “forms of interaction produced by human beings”, it follows that they are understood as “material forces” with which human beings interact in the production of their own conditions of life. As such, they are not themselves actors, but part of the socially given, and historically specific conditions within which actors exist (that is, structures). They cannot be said to engage in social disputes of their own, being rather

part of the institutional background upon which actors enact their own strategies of reproduction and of spatialisation²³.

To substantiate this argument, it becomes necessary to return to the foundations of the notion of agency in Marxism. In doing so, we find that its roots are tied both to the notion of class, and to the genealogical conception of social subjects (that is, the idea that history has ontological significance)²⁴. After this excursus through the philosophy of praxis, we can then proceed to the exposition of how this framework applies to the present study of Brazilian state-formation.

Excursus: Praxis, Class and Historicism

The use of class by Political Marxists comes from the long tradition that sees it as the main unit of social analysis, leading back to the writings of Marx himself. In order to ground this theoretical framework in agency and historicism, it is essential to revisit the way in which the notion of class is used in Marxism. This section will retrace the origins of class back to the Hegelian roots of Marxian thought in four basic steps. Firstly, by looking at what exactly constitutes the “inversion” of Hegel’s dialectic of history by Marx, we find at its core a critique of Hegel’s notion of *Geist* as the transcendental historical subject and ultimate source of agency. Secondly, by analysing Marx’s critique of *Geist*, we can retrace how he replaces its universality and abstraction with a concrete and historically specific notion of *Praxis* understood as the essential activity of human beings as such (Coutinho, 2013, pp. 4, 8; Feenberg, 2014). Thirdly, it is only by acknowledging the multiple historical and concrete forms of human activity that Marx comes to the notion of class as the social entity on which the agency of a particular *Praxis* is embodied (in opposition to other universalist

²³ This is not an instrumentalist argument, according to which institutions (such as states and firms) are simply tools employed by the ruling classes to advance their strategies. The complexity of the process of decision- or policy-making in such institutions depend on their particular power structure, and seldom reflects directly the interests of a particular class. Instead, it is often the result of a power struggle between those agents who find themselves in a position to influence the outcome according to their own strategies. As may happen with any social dispute, the outcome often differs from that intended by the actors involved.

²⁴ This is not an ontological argument tracing an absolute divide between actors (classes) and structures (states and firms). Rather the opposite, it is an historicist argument for an ontology in which actors are shaped through the practices in which they produce their own conditions of existence, that is, their practices of social reproduction, or *praxis*. As the following section will argue, “class” is the analytical category in which historically concrete subjects are grouped through a common praxis, which in turn implies the necessity of understanding class as a historical process rather than a social location.

alternatives, such as Feuerbach's species-being) (Bernstein, 1971). In other words, it is the sharing of a historically specific *praxis* that constitute a class as a historical subject²⁵. At last, we find echoes of this debate in the more recent discussion about the notion of "class as process" proposed by E. P. Thompson (1980) and, especially, by Wood (1995). In order to fulfil its epistemological role of grounding the notions of agency and subjectivity in historical materiality, class must be itself seen as constantly in the making, rather than as structures determined by the "economic laws" of a given mode of production.

It is no secret that Hegel's thought provides the core elements for the intellectual development of Marx, with the most common description of the relation between the two being that of the former's idealist dialectics being "inverted", becoming the latter's historical materialism. For this reason, in order to find the intellectual origins of Marx's theorisation of social agency, it is crucial to return to his critique of Hegelian dialectical conception of history. In a crude and simplistic summary of the argument, Hegel's dialectic of history can be portrayed as the constant cycle of self-alienation of the abstract and universal *Geist* into its own concrete and particular other, and the subsequent return to itself in which all their contradictions are transcended [*aufgehoben*]. *Geist* then is the active essence of history: its own cycle of reaffirming and negating itself is what drives every form of human consciousness, its passions and actions (Bernstein, 1971, pp. 14–21). The core of the critical tradition in which Marx is initially inserted consists of accusing Hegel of inverting the positions of subject and predicate.

"According to Feuerbach, Hegelian philosophy is a 'mystification' because it inverts the subject-predicate relation. (...) *Geist* or *Reason* is not a subject; it is not a source of agency. It is a predicate, the result of real, active, subjects. But Hegel, so Marx claims, has mistaken these real subjects as mere consequences, effects, or predicates of *Geist*." (Bernstein, 1971, p. 38)

The "inversion" of Hegel's dialectic by Marx consists, in its core, of the replacement of a universal abstraction as the source of all historical motion by concrete, "real, active subjects". Rather than having *Geist* as the transcendental subject of history and source of agency, the notion of *Praxis* becomes crucial, representing the

²⁵ The same point appears in E. P. Thompson's classic formulation, according to which "(...) class happens when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs" (Thompson, 1980, p. 9). *Praxis*, here, refers to the particular ways in which their common feelings and identity are articulated in common interests.

concrete forms of human activity inscribed in their historical specificity. It is particularly interesting to see that he is not the first proponent of this materialist inversion of Hegel, since Feuerbach's notion of "species-being" aims to do exactly that. However, as Marx (1969) points out, Feuerbach's critique of Hegel does not go far enough, as it still embraces "human essence" in its entirety, not being able to capture the historically specific forms of activity that shapes the varied concrete forms of human life. It can be said that for Feuerbach, as for Hegel, consciousness needs to be understood as "human consciousness" as a general form. Marx, instead, points out that "Consciousness is not something other than 'sensuous human activity or *praxis*. (...) Furthermore the forms that 'consciousness' takes in society are to be understood within the context of the forms of social *praxis*." (Bernstein, 1971, p. 43)

It follows that there are varied forms of social *praxis*, then there are also multiple forms of consciousness, and they are all products of specific forms of human "sensuous activity". In this sense, we are drawn to an understanding of *praxis* as human activity *per se*, being the connection between the abstract notion of human (as a member of the human species, as Feuerbach intended) and the many historically concrete forms it can assume. "Human nature", in this sense, is determined by each particular form of *praxis*. Humans are products of their own activity²⁶ (Bernstein, 1971, pp. 44–50).

In fact, the very notion of historical subject needs to embrace the variety of social forms that rise out of the multiplicity of historical experiences. As Andrew Feenberg points out, the main claim of the philosophy of praxis is the idea that history has ontological significance (Feenberg, 2014, pp. 7, 49, 108). That is, that historical subjects must be understood according to the particular forms of *praxis* through which they relate to nature and to other humans. In his critique of Feuerbach, it becomes clear that he uses the notion of "class" to replace the still universalising concept of "species-being" for one that accounts for the historically concrete forms of human reproduction:

"When Marx criticizes this concept [of species-being] in the sixth thesis on Feuerbach and says that the essence of man is 'in its actuality the ensemble of social relationships', he is already foreshadowing his concept of class as *the appropriate social category for understanding what man is*. (...)

By the time that Marx wrote *Capital*, he was quite explicit about the abandonment of

²⁶ In this sense, *praxis* can be considered an earlier formulation of Marx's notion of "labour" (Marx, 1976, pp. 283–5). There is no such thing as a rupture between the philosophy of praxis in the early works of Marx and the critique of political economy in the latter ones. The connection between those is demonstrated in the manuscripts of 1844 and was also theorised by Georg Lukacs (Feenberg, 2014, pp. 33, 71; Gomes, 2016; Lukacs, 1975, 1978)

species-being and its replacement by the concept of class.” (Bernstein, 1971, pp. 68–9, italics added)

Having traced the origins of Marx’s use of class back to his critique of Hegel’s *Geist* and Feuerbach’s “species-being”, and understanding it as a historical subject shaped by its historically concrete *praxis* (understood as human (re)productive activity), a new light is shed on the more recent debate around “class as structure” and “class as process” as portrayed by Wood (1995).

Her critique of structural Marxism culminates in a discussion about the different ways in which the notion of class has been used. On one hand, she mentions a first definition of class that is shared by some Marxists and also a larger portion of classical sociology. These scholars consider class to be a social structure, directly derived from “economic” criteria such as the ownership or not of the means of production. As such, it turns class into a social location, constituting, in Wood’s words, a “geological model” (Wood, 1995, p. 76). A reified category deduced from the “logic” of a given set of productive relations that may or may not play a role as a historical actor (according to its consciousness or not of its own class condition – the distinction between class “in itself” and “for itself”). On the other hand, she identifies in the work of E. P. Thompson (and builds upon it) a notion of class that privileges the historical processes of class formation that stems from the common experience of class struggle. According to her, this second definition is “distinctively Marxist” (Wood, 1995, p. 78) precisely because it is of absolute importance for understanding how historical subjects are shaped through class struggle. She argues:

“(…) objective determinations do not impose themselves on blank and passive raw material but on active and conscious *historical* beings. Class formations emerge and develop ‘as men and women *live* their productive relations and *experience* their determinate situations, within “the *ensemble* of social relations”, with their inherited culture and expectations, and as they handle these experiences in cultural ways’. (...) The crucial point is that the main burden of a Marxist theory of class must be less on identifying class ‘locations’ than on explaining processes of class formations.” (Wood, 1995, pp. 80–1, italics in the original)

In sum, in order to be able to ground a conception of historical agency in the category of class, the latter must be understood as a constant process, delimited by the social practices (*praxis*) that create its conditions of existence and reproduction as such²⁷. Otherwise, if classes are seen simply as social structures deduced from the

²⁷ If we understand the “conditions of existence” and “reproduction” as separate moments, we risk a return to structuralist conception of class criticised by Wood. In that sense, the moment of class formation would be that of a structural rupture, while its reproduction assumes the place of structural

“laws” of a particular mode of production (“class in itself”), that may or may not act in accord to its prescribed “historical role” (that is, as a “class for itself”, overcoming the obstacle of “false consciousness”), then the entire process of historical change becomes extraneous to them. In other words, they are constituted as class as a logical necessity of the mode of production (being conceived as general abstractions, and referred to as such: the proletariat, the capitalists, the slaves, the landowners, etc. *in general*, rather than analysed through the particularities of concrete actors) to only then engage in social relations and processes. Wood’s notion of class as process highlights the historical specificities in which historically concrete classes are shaped through the common experience of property relations and the practices of reproduction with which actors respond. Therefore, it not only allows, but requires a genealogical conception of subjects that captures the process through which actors are shaped and framed in a particular way, in each particular context. Only then we can understand the limitations imposed to actors in the making of their own histories. A Marxist theorisation of historical agency needs to be centred on a historically concrete conception of subject, rather than in a logical deduction or structural abstraction. The notion of class can only be the cornerstone of such theorisation if it is conceived as a social relation constantly in the making, itself shaped by history. The notion of “class as process” proposed by E. P. Thompson and Ellen Wood highlights precisely the connection between the notion of *praxis* to a historically concrete social subject, as it focuses on how any given class is shaped (i.e., created and reproduced) by the particular social practices through which it relates to the world, and not in general abstractions logically deduced from “modes of production”. Or, according to Marx and Engels: “The separate individuals form a class only insofar as they have to carry a common battle against another class” (1968, p. 34).

Concluding this parenthesis on the philosophy of praxis and the notion of class, I can now relate it back to the existing argument made by PM in the discipline of IR and highlight how my argument pushes it further, building upon its historicism through the analytical categories developed above. As Ellen Wood writes:

“We need to be reminded why Marxism ascribes a determinative primacy to class

continuity. What I intend here is to, following Wood, bring them together in the notion of class as a “constant process”, in which its reproduction means also the reproduction of those conditions under which its differentiation as a class was possible. The specific practices through which these processes are enacted and the precise moment in which that differentiation means the rise of a different class cannot be conceived in abstraction.

struggle. It is not because class is the only form of oppression or even the most frequent, consistent, or violent source of social conflict, but rather because its terrain is the social organization of production which creates the material conditions of existence itself. The first principle of historical materialism is not class or class struggle, but the organization of material life and social reproduction. Class enters the picture when access to the conditions of existence and to the means of appropriation are organized in class ways, that is, when some people are systematically compelled by differential access to the means of production or appropriation to transfer surplus labour to others.” (Wood, 1995, p. 108)²⁸

In this sense, taking class as the core analytical category and the unit of historical agency – as encompassing a shared praxis – means to analyse history through the “organization of material life and social reproduction”. The Political Marxist argument consists precisely of overcoming the separation imposed upon the organisation of material life between a “base” and a “superstructure”, analysing both means of production and means of appropriation (hence the notion of “social property relations”) through the lens of class struggle. If an *a priori* separation is analytically imposed between them, and the “political” and the “economic” are seen as independent – or relatively autonomous – spheres of social reality, their meaning become transhistorical. That is, the historical specificity of that separation, and the origin of the idea of “purely economic” under capitalism is lost.

Therefore, if the state is conceived in abstraction as a means of juridical-political appropriation of surplus, it follows that “the existence of a state has always implied the existence of classes” (Wood, 1995, pp. 32–3). That being the case, it becomes necessary for a historical account of the transformation of means and relations of production to encompass the simultaneous transformation of the means of political appropriation and the forms of property, as Wood sets out to do. In this sense, class is understood as the historical agent whose interaction (with other classes) produces the very separation between the political and the economic that marks the historical specificity of capitalism. It is not a “purely economic agency”, contained within the sphere of “civil society”, to be contrasted with the “purely political” agency

²⁸ Once again, the tensions between historicism and structuralism in PM reappear. Here, we could focus on a reading of Wood that emphasise “differential access to the means of production or appropriation” as a given social structure within a mode of production by which actors are “systematically compelled”. However, I choose to interpret what she calls “[t]he first principle of historical materialism”, that is, the particular way in which material life and social reproduction are organised, matter in different ways in different historical contexts, and the classes that follow from those are not logical deductions, but results of a historical process consisting of the distinct practices of reproduction that they come up with. In short, I interpret this passage keeping in mind the crucial statement by E. P. Thompson, according to which class “happens (...) embodied in real people and in a real context” (Thompson, 1980, pp. 9–10; Wood, 1995, pp. 83–4)

of the state. This does not mean that the state becomes analytically irrelevant, or fully determined by classes. Rather, it means that the creation of each concrete configuration of state, its continued existence, and its operation must be understood in class terms. And in order to defuse the tension between that general and abstract notion of state used by Wood and the necessity to anchor it in the experience of concrete historical subjects, Teschke and Lacher add to that account the idea that the multiplicity of states in its current form must be historicised through the practices of reproduction of medieval and absolutist lords in their intra ruling class geopolitical competition, emerging from the late European middle ages.

Once the states-system is in place, the interaction between its “units” (through their practices of foreign policy) is not “autonomous” from the class struggles that condition their existence, nor is it “determined” by them. Both of those assumptions would reintroduce structuralism back into the PM argument, explaining history through a configuration of social structures (respectively, the existence of the states-system or of a given mode of production), and not through historical analysis of social and political disputes that led to a given historical outcome. Just like the separation between the “political” and the “economic” cannot be seen as a universal constant, being instead understood through a historically specific set of property relations, the same applies for the way in which social relations produce notions of space – the “geopolitical”. The interaction between “global” and “(inter)national” forms of territoriality cannot be taken as universal, but understood through the strategies of spatialisation that constitute practices of reproduction of concrete actors in a specific context. The evolution of the legal and political institutions (as states and firms) is itself an outcome of such practices. As such, they are part of the analysis not as actors themselves, but as part of the political context constituted by diachronic agencies.

The theoretical argument proposed here builds upon the existing PM tradition exactly by expanding the account of how geopolitical arrangements are shaped by class struggle. In doing so, it contributes to the further historicist radicalisation of the theoretical assumptions (that is, the ontology and epistemology) within the historical materialist tradition, following the steps of a particular reading of PM. This radicalisation works in a double sense: it is at the same time an expansion beyond its current limits, “breaking the chains” of structural deductionism in IR/HIS, and, in a rather dialectical sense, a return to the roots of historical materialism, returning Marx’s philosophy of praxis to the core of the theorisation of agency. By bringing radical

historicism in the heart of its theoretical framework, I argue that PM is in a privileged position to serve as the platform for this reformulation of geopolitics that brings class struggle at its core through the contested processes through which foreign policies and geopolitics are produced – that is, in a non-reductionist and non-deterministic way. In doing so, this elaboration of PM’s historicism also speaks directly to one of the main contemporary challenges within the field of IR/HIS: Eurocentrism.

The Challenge(s) of Eurocentrism

The argument developed so far in this chapter allows for a new engagement with the challenge of Eurocentrism, especially through critiques that have been aimed at these theoretical premises in the past. This section identifies three different meanings of Eurocentrism²⁹, that is, three different ways in which it is posed, especially as a critique to Marxism, and to Political Marxism in tradition. Firstly, it appears as the claim of European primacy in historical analysis, the belief that Europe holds a monopoly over innovation and autonomous development, and other regions are at a “previous stage” of development. Secondly, it appears as a claim of European historical self-sufficiency, that is, that Europe’s history can be explained on its own, without any reference to or interference from non-European agents. Thirdly, as a claim of European epistemological universalism, according to which the categories developed by European philosophy and social theory are uniquely able to address the entire variety of human experiences, marking non-European thought as “backward”.

These three definitions of Eurocentrism are not meant to encompass the entire discussion on such a complex topic that has implications all across the social sciences. Instead, these were selected for speaking more directly to the study at hand. The first two have been directed as criticism towards Brenner, Wood, and Political Marxism as a whole. The third appears in the work of Latin American Decolonial scholars, providing a productive engagement for the historical materialist framework that I propose in this work.

²⁹ This is similar to other expositions of the different meanings assumed by the notion of Eurocentrism (Anievas and Nisancioglu, 2015, pp. 4–5; Hobson, 2012, pp. 3–10; Matin, 2013b, p. 354). Still, it is different from those as it means to account for the particular meanings of Eurocentrism with which the argument developed here engages.

European Primacy and the “Spatiotemporal Tunnel”

Starting with those which have been used as critiques of Political Marxism, much of these critiques are based on the Brenner Thesis of the transition towards capitalism, or on what Wood develops directly in relation to that discussion. Since much of the argument developed in this chapter consists precisely in demonstrating how PM has evolved past its original formulation in their works, it is only logical that the response to these critiques must not be read simply as a defence of “first-generation” PM scholars. It was already discussed how the framework presented here differs from theirs in significant aspects. As those critiques of internalism and Eurocentrism are aimed at PM as a whole through their work, it is important to demonstrate that, regardless of how valid those accusations are judged to be, we can still find in their contributions the roots of a radically historicist framework for social and geopolitical analysis. The contribution presented to IR/IHS by PM consists precisely in providing a historical explanation for the multiplicity of territorial sovereignties, drawing out the non-deterministic interaction between capitalism and the states-system. As such, it provides a non-Eurocentric approach to IR and IHS that breaks the dichotomy between “domestic” and “international” precisely by historicising forms of territoriality, moving away from state-centrism or any form of internalism or methodological nationalism. For this reason, my response to the critiques of PM are based on my own formulation of the theory, not on that of Brenner or Wood.

The first meaning of Eurocentrism is that of an assumption of European historical primacy, in which European history effectively holds a monopoly over historical innovation, development, and progress. It is presented to PM as a critique of the “internalism” that taints the Brenner Thesis, especially through the work of James Blaut (1993, 2000). Brenner’s argument on the transition debate relies on a comparative study of the history of class struggle and political structures across Europe, in order to explain why the birthplace of capitalism was England rather than any other place. His explanation culminates, among other things, in a new interpretation of “capitalism” as the historically particular outcome of the feudal crisis in English countryside. Contra the “Malthusian” and “commercialization” models of transition to capitalism, he argues that class struggle is what explains the different results of demographic pressures and increasing commerce in each context (Brenner,

1977, 1985b, 1985a). It is precisely by placing the origin of capitalism in English agrarian class struggle that Brenner is accused of internalism. According to Blaut (1993, 1994), he frames capitalism within a historical and geographical “tunnel vision”, making it a product of the class struggle in the English countryside alone. Extra-European events would have been rendered insignificant. Other scholars have drawn extensively on this critique, reframing it as an attack on PM as a whole rather than on Brenner (Anievas and Nisancioglu, 2014, 2015, pp. 22–32, Davidson, 2012, 2014). By drawing on Brenner’s argument on the transition debate, Wood, Teschke, Lacher and others are irredeemably tainted with his “spatiotemporal limits”.

This critique is closely followed by the second meaning of Eurocentrism outlined above. Since the “tunnel vision” supposedly adopted by Brenner limits his account of the transition to capitalism to the analysis of European (or rather, English) events, the second meaning of Eurocentrism – the idea of European history being self-sufficient, detached from any interference from non-European agents – is immediately apparent. Brenner (for Blaut; PM as a whole for the others) is Eurocentric, because all his explanations of the rise of capitalism are uniquely intra-European. Blaut goes as far as framing Brenner’s argument as “diffusionism”, since the only examples of “autonomous development” take place in Europe, and are only later taken to the rest of the world (Blaut, 1994, pp. 351–2). This framing of capitalism as an English invention also appears as a critique of “internalism”, that is, one that privileges intra-European (or even exclusively English) agencies, in complete disregard for non-European ones. As summed up by Anievas and Nisancioglu:

“(…) Brenner spatially reduces capitalism’s origins to processes that occurred solely in the English countryside; towns and cities are omitted; European-wide dynamics are active only as comparative cases, and the world outside Europe does not figure at all. Similarly excluded are the numerous technological, cultural, institutional and social-relational discoveries and developments originating outside Europe that were appropriated by Europe in the course of its capitalist development. In short, Brenner neglects the determinations and conditions that arose from the social interactions *between* societies, since ‘political community’, in his conception, is subordinated to ‘class’, while classes themselves are conceptualised within the spatial limits of the political community in question. (...) Temporal tunnelling gives rise to the notion of *historical priority*; spatial tunnelling gives rise to a *methodologically internalist* analysis. For Brenner’s followers these problems are only compounded, as the possibility of the development of early capitalisms outside of the English countryside that Brenner allows for is rejected. The notion of the origins of ‘capitalism in one country’ is thus taken literally.” (Anievas and Nisancioglu, 2015, p. 25, italics in the original)

Since the critiques seen above can almost be entirely ascribed to Brenner³⁰, the response to it could be framed either as a defence of his work, or as a total rejection of its legacy to PM. The argumentation that follows can be said to be *via media* between the two, articulated around a different interpretation of Brenner's work. The innovative seed found in Brenner's work that originates the PM tradition is its invitation towards historicism through the analytical priority given to the historical specificity of the outcomes of class struggle in each specific context. By committing to that initial historicist impulse, one can find inconsistencies in Brenner's own work, where he reverts to structuralist reasoning himself (one example being the underdeveloped notion of geopolitics used by him, already discussed above). As such, this is more than a simple defence or rejection of Brenner's work, but a more precise identification of what exactly in his contribution is essential to PM in its radical historicist version.

Perhaps the most important contribution to historicism present in Brenner can be summarised as the assumption that change must be understood as class struggle, both vertically and horizontally. This brings the commitment to break the "base/superstructure" dichotomy, understanding class struggle as the cornerstone of the development of political structures and cultural practices (justifying the term "Political Marxism"). That latter aspect – horizontal class struggle – is further developed by Teschke and Lacher in its spatial aspect, providing a historical account to the very divide between "inside" and "outside".

This understanding of historical change through class struggle paves the way for his different notion of capitalism. By framing it as the result of the particular outcome of the class struggle in post-feudal English agriculture, Brenner is framing it not as an abstraction, but as a *historically concrete phenomenon*, resulting from the contested actions of equally concrete historical subjects³¹, that is, from class struggle. Conceptualised as a particular way in social relations determine bonds of property

³⁰ With the exception of the Brenner-Wood debate about a Dutch "failed" transition (Brenner, 2001; Wood, 2002b), briefly mentioned in the quote above.

³¹ In other words, the characterisation of PM's definition of capitalism as "platonic", or "ideal-typical" (Anievas and Nisancioglu, 2015, pp. 29–30; Davidson, 2012, p. 421) is fruit of a reading of the Brenner thesis that misses precisely its most valuable contribution.

It is important to highlight once again that the use of the word "concrete" in "concrete historical subjects" does not refer to a need for adding historical detail onto a preconceived general explanatory theory. In this sense, "concreteness" is not a matter of having "enough" or "insufficient" historical detail. Instead, it represents the necessity of allowing such historical detail guide the analytical categories themselves – such as which classes are involved in the making of a given outcome and the relation between them.

between people and the objects of their labour (therefore, as social-property relations), it needs to be understood through the historically (and geographically) specific conditions of its origin. In other words, if it is taken as a concrete historical phenomenon, its origins need to be traced back to the time and place where its *differentia specifica* was first manifested – namely, in early 17th century English agriculture³².

Additionally, one must mind the way in which Brenner brings “extra-English” factors in his account of the development of capitalism. He mentions and engages with the commercial networks through Dutch cities, Anglo-French warfare, the Black Death, among others, but points out that those are not sufficient causes to explain the rise of capitalism. What needs explanation, for Brenner, is that different outcomes were produced by these phenomena in each European region (England, France, Catalonia, Holland, etc.). Therefore, class struggle is given its analytical centrality not because of a dogmatic subscription to a particular reading of Marx’s work, but because it is what explains why the same external stimuli produced different outcomes in each territorial unit (to the point of explaining, as per Teschke and Lacher, the existence of these territorial units themselves). Different to what Anievas and Nisancioglu (2015) seem to present, explaining European history through non-European agencies is not the same thing as tracing the *differentia specifica* within the “rise of the West”. To reach the latter, historical agents (“internal” or “external”) should be considered through the *efficacy* with which they are able to influence outcomes in each context where they appear. The power asymmetries between the many actors involved in class *struggle* must be considered when considering the roles of such actors in the production of a given historical outcome.

Such a brief exposition of what is understood to be the crucial contribution in Brenner’s work is already enough to establish a crucial consequence for a construction of a historicist theoretical framework. Namely, if capitalism is taken as a concrete phenomenon that rises as the result of concrete social forces, it becomes essential to maintain such social forces at the core of the analysis. That is the reason why agency must take analytical primacy over structural logics³³, and why historical processes

³² The importance of the Brenner-Wood debate lies precisely in narrowing the focus on where exactly lies such *differentia specifica*, if on the existence of free wage labour (as argued by Brenner) or on its subordination to “market imperatives” (as per Wood).

³³ This does not mean that structures do not exist. The legal and political institutions that constitute the state, for instance, or the dynamics of competitive capitalist accumulation described by Marx are not

cannot be derived from theoretical deductions. That culminates in the necessity of historicising each concrete form assumed by social agency, seeing social subjects not as given fixed entities, but in perpetual motion, in constant processes of becoming. In other words, it is necessary to have a genealogical approach to subjects themselves.

If these core tenets of radical historicism and agency-centrism are taken to their spatial consequences, by tracing the connection between the concrete forms of social *praxis* and their strategies of spatialisation, and taking those as the cornerstone of the construction of territorial political structures and their geopolitics, the accusation of internalism is dissolved as a logical impossibility. The very existence of territorially bounded political structures or national communities becomes, under that framework of historical analysis, something to be explained. The particular way in which they are divided from each other, where each of the borders are drawn and how they affect each of the social actors, all of this must be understood through the different practices of spatialization that enforce them or resist them, through both vertical and horizontal class struggle. For this reason, a reading of Brenner, Wood, and the broader PM tradition as a whole that emphasises its historicist and agency-centred vocation rooted in the philosophy of praxis and a genealogical understanding of subjects – as the one developed earlier in this chapter – signals a definite rejection of these accusations of “spatiotemporal tunnelling” resulting from these two conceptions of Eurocentrism.

Eurocentric Epistemology

Besides the discussion above on Eurocentrism as both the belief of an inherent historical primacy of Europe (or in Brenner’s case, England) and as the erasure of non-European agencies in the making of history, there is also a third meaning in which Eurocentrism is used. According to group of Decolonial thinkers, the entire intellectual edifice of the social sciences is based upon epistemological and ontological categories that come from the Enlightenment tradition, and are therefore tied to its conception of European modernity. For this reason, the application of such categories to non-European histories represents a symbolic violence to the latter, since these categories betray a totalising universality from which non-Europeans are excluded, or at best,

excluded from the analysis, but considered through the lens of classes who act to reproduce or resist them in particular contexts and the outcomes (intended or not) of their disputes.

appear only as objects, not subjects. The main target of these scholars is the assumption that European philosophy and social science correspond to a universal epistemology (Dussel, 1985; Grosfoguel, 2002; Mignolo, 2002; Quijano, 2008). According to Mignolo,

“It is no longer possible, or at least it is not unproblematic, to ‘think’ from the canon of western philosophy, even when part of the canon is critical of modernity. To do so means to reproduce the blind epistemic ethnocentrism that makes difficult, if not impossible, any political philosophy of inclusion. The limit of Western philosophy is the border where the colonial difference emerges, making visible the variety of local histories that Western thought, from the right and the left, hid and suppressed.” (Mignolo, 2002, p. 66)

In order to decolonise knowledge, then, the proposal is to abandon the epistemological tradition of western thought, replacing it with the “pluritopical hermeneutic” of “border-thinking”, i.e., “displacing hegemonic forms of knowledge into the perspective of the subaltern.” (Mignolo, 2000, pp. 11–2). The European critique of modernity reproduces “Western logocentrism, capitalism, Eurocentrism” and “cannot be valid for persons who think and live in Asia, Africa or Latin America”. The starting point of decolonial knowledge cannot be any of the European values held dear by modernity, but “colonial difference” itself (Mignolo, 2002, pp. 85–6).

Such an extensive rejection presents two problems. Firstly, we can question to what extent these scholars can really position themselves outside all existing forms of western thought³⁴. Secondly, by replacing the enlightenment roots of the social sciences (“reason”, “development”, “progress”, and so on) with the notion of “colonial difference” the outcome is not the rejection of a totalising universality, but simply the substitution of those that serve as pillars for European modernity for another one, based on the ontological position of the “border” as the privileged starting point of analysis. As it is never clarified who constitutes the colonised subject that stands on the “other” side of the colonial border, or who and what can be said to be on the “border”, the “coloniality of power” appears as another universal, serving as the de-historicised founding moment of modernity and its forms of subjectivity (the European coloniser, the African worker, the American native) (Quijano, 2008, pp. 181–4).

The theoretical framework proposed here builds upon the idea of “colonial difference” by giving it different sociological grounds based on an analysis of how

³⁴ In this respect, the commentary by Cicciarello-Maher (2017) on Dussel’s (1985) philosophy of liberation as a critique of dialectics serves as a pristine example. According to the former, the latter’s critique fails to reject dialectics as inscribed in an European totality. Instead, he posits the relation between this European totality and its non-European Other as one “dialectical movement”.

colonialism, understood as the unfolding of contested strategies of spatialisation, is put in motion by concrete historical actors. In that sense, it becomes more adequate to speak of a historical process of differentiation shaped by class conflict (in which the power gap between different agencies play a crucial role), rather than to posit a “colonial difference” as an ontological otherness. The fact that many European-made categories are being used in this analysis (like historicism, dialectics, class, and many others) is not in itself an obstacle. The problem resides in bringing with these categories a particular historical experience disguised as a universal one. That is, the problem lies not in using such categories as part of a methodological commitment to historicism in the analysis of historically concrete subjects, but in presupposing a historical teleology in which the destiny of every social dispute would lead towards the course of European history, and towards the formation of European historical subjects.

The entire theoretical discussion in this chapter clearly indicates a rejection of the latter in favour of the former. However, the mere statement of such theoretical principles is insufficient to prevent said epistemological and historiographical errors. The next and final section of this chapter will therefore return to the central question of this thesis, demonstrating how the theory developed here is mobilised to provide a geopolitical account of Brazilian state-formation that is rooted in class struggle. At the same time, by outlining how this case study is divided along the next chapters, it also serves as a guide for the reader through the rest of this thesis.

Brazilian State-Formation: A Political Marxist Account

Having developed the theoretical framework above, the remaining question is: how to apply it to the analysis of a historical case study? More specifically, what can PM’s social-property relations approach add to the existing narratives on the geopolitics of Brazilian state-formation? And what can this particular body of theory, the discipline of IR, and its subfields like IHS and GPE gain from this historical study on trans-Atlantic class struggle and state-formation? Such questions are better responded through a brief discussion of the points made in each of the chapters, which follows below. There is, however, one general point about the relation between history and theory that applies to the project as a whole.

One underlying assumption of this research is that it is possible to employ categories of social scientific analysis in a way that requires historicisation – in terms of the genealogies of the forces or structures designated by such categories – rather than abstract from it by assuming that the categories bring (or impose) a particular historical content of their own. One of the main purposes of this chapter has been to formulate a way of doing precisely that. The “radical historicism” proposed by PM consists of replacing explanatory theory with a methodology for historical analysis, in a way that the role of theory is not to explain history, but to provide a systematic formulation for historical studies. It means to explore history for its specificities, rather than for its generalities (and exceptions). It also means, as argued above, to understand classes as agents, and as concrete historical subjects. That is, rather than considering them as generic and abstract agents that appear as a logical and structural necessity from a mode of production (“workers”, “capitalists”, “slaves”, “lords”, etc.), they must be understood through their specific genealogies. In this sense, for example, it makes more sense to understand Brazilian landowners in the history of property relations within the Portuguese Empire than trying to see how they fit into the generical abstractions of “capitalist landowners” or “feudal lords” (Gorender, 1978; Prado Jr., 2012; Sodré, 1979).

The starting point (Chapter 3) for such a historical and geopolitical study of Brazilian state-formation could be no other than the encounter between Portuguese colonialism in early 16th century and native populations in America that led to the creation of Brazil as an European colony in South America. The PM approach described above leads to an analysis of Portugal during the 15th century that can account for the rise of maritime expansion as the outcome of a particular Portuguese response to the feudal crisis, while keeping in mind Portugal’s insertion into the wider context of European intra-lordly class struggle. This allows for an interpretation of colonialism that shows the historical evolution of the Portuguese empire through its class struggle dynamics between its lords and merchants (and of those, through the Empire, against American natives), the native American populations, and the wider European geopolitics: the competition with other imperial powers, the dynastic entanglements of the early modern period, and its eventual shift to the sphere of influence of British informal empire. At the same time, it sheds new light over the

formation and operation of Brazilian colonial slavery³⁵. Through that, processes of class differentiation are tracked, revealing different strategies of spatialisation formulated by its working and ruling classes.

The next step (Chapter 4) interrogates how this scenario developed to the point of Brazil obtaining its formal independence and establishing its sovereign statehood under the rule of the same House of Braganza that governed Portugal. That covers the period roughly between 1808 and 1840, and sheds new light over the period known as the “First Empire”. Again, by tracking its historical development through the intra-ruling class disputes between the Brazilian land- and slaveowners, the Portuguese aristocracy and the British merchants, it becomes possible to establish how Brazilian statehood emerges as an outcome of the clashes between the geopolitical strategies devised by each of those actors. At the same time, it integrates an account of the First Empire’s geopolitical status as a part of the British informal empire, with a Political Economy of colonial slavery and the political disputes emerging from the clashes between the “Brazilian” and “Portuguese” factions influencing policy-making in Rio. Rather than being simply a formal act of international law, the formation of Brazil as a sovereign state involves the articulation of conflicting imperial geopolitics from Portugal and Britain, and the strategies set in place by a local elite.

The third and last part of the case study (Chapter 5) covers the institutional transformation of the Brazilian state under the Second Empire, until the fall of the Braganza monarchy with the rise of the Old Republic in 1889. By tracking the intra-ruling class relations, we locate the rise of a new ruling class in Brazil – the *oeste paulista* coffee barons – whose interest in the political structure of territorial sovereignty becomes different from that of the other landlords from other regions. This change is noticed by reconstructing the transformations in Brazilian foreign policy practice, distancing itself from British influence, and in the legal reforms of land property and labour relations, culminating in the abolition of slavery in 1888. The narrative of continuity represented by the “coloniality” in the rule of the state by a white minority of European descent after its formal independence must therefore be brought into question. It is only by tracking the historical, sociological, and geopolitical roots of such rule that we are able to recognise some colonial legacies that

³⁵ It does so by further historicising Gorender’s approach, in opposition to the structuralism found in the many accounts that place it somewhere between the feudal and capitalist modes of production (Banaji, 1972; Gorender, 1978; Prado Jr., 2012; Sodré, 1979).

remain at the core of the Brazilian state (such as its institutional racism and its protection of large land property) while at the same time accounting for the transformations in the political institutions throughout the period.

The narrative described above evidences a few choices made when defining the scope of this research. Firstly, the chronological selection aims at returning to the very early days of Brazil as a Portuguese colony, investigating the colonial encounter itself and the roots of Portuguese maritime expansion in the geopolitics that constituted it. This allows for engagement with the arguments that attribute the specificity of Brazilian and Latin American history to its “colonial difference”. It only goes as far as the establishment of the Old Republic in 1889, mostly because of the limitations of time and word limit inherent to this research. However, it makes sense from the argument made here: the state that is formed in the 1820s relies heavily on the legitimacy attributed (domestically and internationally) to the Braganza monarchy. The shift towards a new political balance among the Brazilian ruling classes from the 1850s onwards gives rise to a new context, in which that monarchy could not sustain itself (this is covered in detail in Chapter 5).

Secondly, there is a geographical selection as well. The process of state-formation analysed here is primarily carried on by the interaction between ruling classes (Portuguese aristocrats, Brazilian landowners and British diplomats) and it takes place on the privileged spaces destined to their encounters, such as Rio de Janeiro, Salvador and Lisbon – as the geographical centres of Portuguese imperial power on both sides of the Atlantic throughout this period. This does not mean that resistance “from below”, or vertical class struggle, is not taken into account, but that it is considered in one of two ways: either as the broader context which those spatialisation practices produced at the courts speaks to, or when it appears with such power that the attention of centralised power is turned towards it (as is certainly the case with Palmares during the 17th century, or with the many separatist rebellions in the 1840s). The reason for this choice is entirely of scale. When covering such a long period of history and such a vast territory as that of Brazil’s (and considering how it expanded during this period), it is not possible for the analysis to go down to the micro-histories of each farm, city, or region. If the narrative at some points might seem “Rio-centric”, that is because it serves as the point of encounter for the geopolitics formulated by local elites from all other regions in Brazil, as well as between those and Portuguese colonial policies and the foreign policies of British informal empire.

In sum, this historical analysis encompasses the colonial and monarchical periods of Brazilian history applying the historicist and agency-centred approach developed by PM IR scholars with a focus on the strategies of spatialisation in class struggle as discussed in this chapter. In doing so, it provides an innovative account of an important transformation in the states-system, through an analysis of how European colonialism carried the notion of the state as a sovereign territorial entity beyond Europe itself. This enriches the existing historicist narrative provided by Political Marxism on the development and expansion of the European inter-state system, while expanding the account of the geopolitical practices of colonialism through the class conflicts that generated it.

Chapter 3 – Portuguese Colonialism

Introduction

The first step in a historicist account of Brazilian state-formation is an analysis of the centuries in which this political institution was shaped by Portuguese colonialism. There are many sociological accounts of Brazil that attribute the key aspects of its social reality to a colonial legacy, in many forms (Faoro, 2001; Holanda, 2012; Prado Jr., 2011, 2012). Similarly, a large Decolonial literature defines coloniality as an underlying feature of modernity, that represents the continuity of forms of subjectivity, knowledge, and power that are products of colonialism (Dussel, 1985, 1994, Mignolo, 2000, 2002, 2011, Quijano, 2007, 2008). Although their notions of colonialism differ significantly, all of them use it as an explanatory category. That is, rather than investigating the historical processes and the broader context in which it was produced, they simply take for granted a definition whose purpose is to *explain* that historical process. Following the theoretical commitment to agency-centred historicism established in this research, I will start by looking at the concrete praxes that constituted this historical process in order to replace this generic notion of colonialism with one that is built from the specificity of the Brazilian-Portuguese case.

This chapter reconstructs the historical experience of Portuguese colonialism in Brazil in three distinctive periods: the colonial encounter that results from Portuguese maritime expansionism and its immediate consequences, the shift towards a slave-based plantation economy, and the discovery of gold mines with the rise in British influence in the Portuguese empire. This reconstruction is governed by the grounding of geopolitics in social property relations, and the focus on their contested nature against the imposition of overarching logics over history. As a result, the chapter identifies the formation of a colonial slave-based set of social property relations as the main legacy of colonialism, which, as it will later be shown, influences the development of legal and political structures and class relations in Brazil for centuries to come.

Firstly, I revisit the colonial encounter through a social analysis of its two sides. The Native American societies occupying the South American coast are studied along their own social divisions and organizations that can be ascertained from their linguistic registers and agricultural techniques. Similarly, the history of Portuguese

expansionism is examined from its historical context with an analysis that encompasses the formation of the Kingdom of Portugal, the Reconquista, the feudal crisis, and the Revolution of Avis. The geopolitical struggles against other European powers (mostly Castille/Spain, France and the Dutch Provinces) are then understood as a clash between these pre-capitalist and premodern ways of geopolitical accumulation (Teschke, 2009).

Secondly, the shift towards a pattern of occupation focused on slave-based sugar plantations is analysed as an outcome of these premodern imperial rivalries, and of the way in which the encounter between Portuguese settlers and American Natives unfolded throughout the 16th century. The issue of which “mode of production” it constituted (one of the major discussions among Brazilian Marxist historians) is addressed, with an intervention that stems from the peculiarities of its own colonial reality, moving away from its categorization within notions of “modes of production” created from the study of different historical contexts. The colonial slave-based set of social property relations is firmly reinforced, despite its constant social contestation, with the economic success of colonial Brazil in the 17th century. Its geopolitical insertion in the context of the Dutch wars against the Habsburg Empire and Portugal’s separation from the latter becomes a crucial element to understand the crisis affecting Brazil (and the Portuguese Empire in its entirety) in late 17th century, and the subsequent period of entanglement with the British Empire.

The discovery of extensive gold reserves in the Brazilian territory early in the 18th century finances the Luso-British alliance and prompts an administrative reorganization of Brazil, in order to allow a stronger centralized control of the political and economic aspects of the colony from Lisbon. When the decrease in gold output in the second half of that century is counteracted with an even stronger control of economic activity in Brazil, the first revolts of white settlers against colonial rule appear in Brazil. The same slave-based social property relations that provided the foundation of the sugar plantations are actively reinforced throughout the mining regions (resulting for instance in the increase of slave prices), being therefore expanded to a larger portion of current Brazilian territory.

The reconstruction outlined above is governed by grounding geopolitics in social property relations. It is precisely their contested nature that militates against the imposition of overarching logics that supposedly explain the social processes of Portuguese colonialism and their outcomes in Brazilian history. For instance, in

segments of this chapter I engage with Latin American Post-Colonialism and its use of the Eurocentric categories of race to explain the different forms of labour control established in America and throughout the world. Also, I discuss the problems of the World-Systems perspective in explaining the origins of Portuguese expansionism, and the adoption and reproduction of African slavery in Brazil from the days of Portuguese occupation to the way it is connected to the rise of British hegemony in Europe.

As a result, the chapter provides two important contributions to the overall thesis, and to the broader comprehension of colonialism in Brazil. Firstly, there is no single structural driving force that provides a sufficient explanation of Portuguese imperial expansion and colonisation in South America. It can only be properly understood as an outcome of the many social disputes that constitute the process of its making. Secondly, the legacy of Portuguese colonialism is identified as the set of slave-based social property relations that is built and subsequently reinforced throughout those centuries. Besides the widespread adoption of African slavery as the main source of labour, it also entails a particular form of land property inherited from the Portuguese *sesmarias* system that sustains a fragmented political authority, and a distinct connection to the “outside” constituted by the necessity of import of slaves and export of commodities. These contributions enable a better understanding of how Portuguese colonialism and the colonial encounter provided the starting point of Brazilian state-formation precisely by highlighting the specific historical connections between these two processes.

The Two Sides of the Colonial Encounter: “Precolonial Brazil”

The multiplicity of ethnic groups that occupied the area that constitutes Brazilian territory and the fact that none of them had any sort of systematic written records creates significant obstacles for the reconstruction of their cultural and social orders. Given that difficulty, most of the evidence relies on archaeological findings (mostly graveyards, ceramics, and paintings on rocks and trees) and the research produced by ethnolinguistic studies. While the former allow us to identify migration patterns and vague aspects of their social organisation³⁶, it is only the latter, and, of

³⁶ Such as the migration through the Behring strait and south at around 60,000 BP. Which first populated the American continent, or the rise of settled agriculture at around 8,000 b.C. in the Amazon region and around 4,000 b.C. in the central highlands and coastal areas of South America (Hemming, 1978, p. 48).

course, written records produced by the first European explorers, which gives us a closer insight on the variety of ethnic groups occupying the coast in the early days of the 16th century.

According to linguistic categories, there were four main groups of Indians in the Brazilian territory: *Tupis*, *Gês*, *Arawaks* and *Caribs*. The latter two occupied the Amazon region, the Caribs being also present in the northern part of South America and in the Caribbean islands, and the Arawaks in the western part of the forest and northwards across Central America. There is intense archaeological debate about a possible Tupi diaspora, with a starting point in south-eastern Amazon (the Upper Xingu region, which would indicate a remote Arawak origin). There is also evidence of conflict between Tupis and Gês in the north-eastern coast of current Brazilian territory, which resulted in the latter being known as *Tapuios* (the Tupi word for barbarian, enemy) and evicted to the central regions of current Brazil between 500 and 1,000 years before the arrival of the Portuguese. In the south, however, there is evidence of a more peaceful coexistence with the *Guarani* from current Paraguay and Argentina, forming the *Tupi-Guarani* language which eventually became the first *lingua franca* of the Portuguese colony (Hemming, 1978, pp. 54–55; Teixeira da Silva, 1990, p. 38).

When the Portuguese arrived in 1500, the Tupi were the ones occupying the coast, and for that reason became the most well-known native group in official historiography, being more extensively described by the registers of both Portuguese and French travellers than any other group. However, the extension of the territory, the very low demographic density, and the centuries of interaction between these different ethnic groups prevent treating them as a single social entity. In a rough comparison, it would probably equate to treating European populations of Latin origin (the Italian Republics, Castilla, Portugal, and so on) as a single group, in opposition to, for instance, Saxons and Slavs. In fact, European explorers had a wide variety with experiences in dealing with different Tupi tribes. The Tupinambá, for instance, offered a strong resistance to Portuguese occupation in the Northeast, while the French successfully established an alliance with the Tamoio around Guanabara Bay against their common enemies: the *Waitacá* (*Goytacaz*), a reminiscent group of Gês in the Northern coast of current Rio de Janeiro and Espírito Santo states, and later the Portuguese (Hemming, 1978, pp. 55, 122; Teixeira da Silva, 1990, p. 38).

The tribes, either Tupi or Gê, along the coast presented some form of nomadism. That was mostly due to their agricultural technique of shifting cultivation, which required the soil to “rest”, reverting to its original vegetation after being used for their plantations (mostly of manioc, corn and beans) (Teixeira da Silva, 1990, p. 39). That is, unlike other forms of nomadism – as the one seen in the steppes of central Eurasia – the migration patterns are not defined by herds. The nomadic societies in this case are not “pastoral” like those studied by Léfèbure (1979) and Anderson (2000). Therefore, the remarks regarding the peculiarity of social relations derived from forms of property over cattle and land (Anderson, 2000; Marx, 1993; Matin, 2013a) cannot be assumed to apply to the tribes of Latin American natives. In fact, the forms of division of labour varied immensely from tribe to tribe, some adopting more egalitarian orders and some others a clearer division along lines of gender, age, and kinship. Tribes which presented some clear political authority sometimes did so on both secular and religious grounds (Flowers, 1994, p. 259; Machado, 2006, p. 764).

This should be enough to evidence how diverse were the many native societies in South America prior to the arrival of European explorers. Much remains unknown about them, both because of a lack of interest of Eurocentric historiography which largely ignores native societies and of the many difficulties in obtaining reliable sources, as mentioned, for the main written records produced by Europeans in the 16th century seem to reveal more about the Europeans themselves than about the American natives³⁷. It was only with the rise of new scientific methods in the twentieth century (be it ethnographies or Carbon dating) that much of this became known, and even so, many of the first interventions in these fields were by non-Brazilian scholars, which on its own reveals how these societies were relegated to a secondary role (if they played any at all) in the politics of Brazilian national identity.

The Two Sides of the Colonial Encounter: Portugal

On the other side of the Atlantic, the early modern transatlantic maritime expansion must be understood as a product of Portugal’s response to the feudal crisis

³⁷ For instance, sometimes different accounts were produced by rival missionaries (such as Jean de Léry and André Thevet among the Tupinambá). Also, the depiction of the natives as both docile innocent souls (as in most of Caminha’s letters to the King of Portugal), and as crude and vile barbarians, whose language lacked F, L and R sounds, indicating an absence of Faith, Law, and Royalty (Cunha, 1990).

in the late middle ages. There is an extensive literature with a variety of competing accounts of what exactly this process entailed, and the different forms it unfolded in many regions of the continent (Anderson, 1974; Brenner, 1977; Comninel, 2000; Wallerstein, 1974). In particular, the first generation of Political Marxist scholars provide a very compelling account of the divergent responses to the feudal crisis in England and France (Brenner, 1985a, pp. 46–62, 1985b, pp. 275–303; Wood, 2002a, pp. 169–170). Building on this tradition, this section will expand the analysis of the feudal crisis and its different outcomes in terms of social property relations in order to include the peculiarities of the Portuguese case. This encompasses particularly the period between the 14th and 15th centuries, that is, between the decline in agricultural production and the “golden age” of navigations.

The specificity of the outcome of the feudal crisis in Portugal resides in the fact that the medieval emphyteutic ties in which peasants had grants to the land that lasted for generations with fixed rents are not substituted by an embryonic form of agrarian capitalism as in England, nor by a consolidation of peasant property as in France. Rather, they are reinforced in a law from 1375, which consolidates the *Sesmaria* system. Its main differences to the legal institute of emphyteusis are: (a) the fact that abandoned land could be expropriated and re-allocated; (b) that unemployed urban workers could be forced to work (and their sons and grandsons would be forced to remain working on the same land); and (c) the value of rent would be fixed by agents of the king. Therefore, as in the French non-transition described by Brenner that culminates in the formation of an absolute monarchy, the nobility lost the possibility of using the value of rent in order to increase its own income. And even if peasant property rights were not secured, migration into towns (and the subsequent formation of a mass of dispossessed urban workers) was prevented by compelling poorer workers to return (Disney, 2009a, pp. 108, 115–6).

At the same time, the nobility and the king were complementing their income by taxation of (and in a later moment by actively participating in) maritime trade. From late 14th century onwards, the participation of Portuguese merchants in the trade networks that were connected through its ports increased significantly, receiving strong support from the crown. Many of these Portuguese merchants were members of the nobility that, since the end of the *Reconquista*, had limited chances to increase their gains through conquering new land, and chose to do so by engaging in trade under royal protection, giving origin to a “noble/merchant” class. This particular context in

which the crown not only actively defended its own merchants but also engaged itself in trade would give rise to the Portuguese mercantilist trade: a territorialisation of trade networks in order to reap profits from buying cheap and selling dear through the establishment of colonial monopolies and a network of commercial outposts. As the competition in these trade networks was heavily militarised, and the means of surplus extraction relied on military coercion, political authority became gradually less fragmented, with a growing portion of this noble/merchant class tied into a “tax/office state” better able to provide the military apparatus to establish and protect monopolies and trade routes (Disney, 2009a, pp. 110–2; Rosenberg, 1994, pp. 92–94, 120–122; Teschke, 2009, pp. 168–171, 201–204; Wood, 2012a, pp. 131–140, 169–70).

Therefore, as the Political Marxist tradition put it, the rise of the absolutist state and the centralisation of sovereignty can be traced back to forms of social conflicts based on political accumulation (taxation of peasants, establishment of commercial monopolies, sale of offices) in which (continental) European nobility found itself entangled. In Portugal, as in other parts of Europe, this particular social configuration engendered patterns of geopolitical accumulation through wars and dynastic marriages in order to secure territorial claims and access to trade routes and monopolies. This account of medieval geopolitics explains the formation of kingdoms like Portugal and Castile, and the wars of dynastic succession involving the two (and other European kingdoms). It also shows how the rise of mercantilist trade and commercial imperialism was conditioned by these pre-capitalist social strategies of political and geopolitical accumulation. *I.e.*, their methods of wealth extraction from their colonies relied on coercive means (in the specific social property relations or serfdom and slavery, or via the political maintenance of the monopoly) rather than on economic ones (Arruda, 1991, pp. 367–373; Kiely, 2010, pp. 27–29; Teschke, 2009, pp. 220–7). If the rise of this noble/merchant class can only be understood in the context of the outcomes of the feudal crisis, the maritime expansion only begins after the end of the Castilian Wars of the 14th century and the establishment of the House of Aviz in Lisbon³⁸. A class analysis of the Portuguese society reveals a strong support of Portuguese landowning nobles for João of Aviz. For the transformation of landed

³⁸ The Aviz revolution is considered by some historians to be the Portuguese “bourgeois revolution”, *i.e.*, the ascension of a bourgeois merchant class with the decline of the feudal aristocracy (Braudel, 1984, p. 140). As argued above, however, most of this merchant class has its origins in the nobility and is grounded in pre-capitalist forms of commerce, geopolitics, and accumulation.

aristocracy and rise of wealthy merchants happened in the most urban regions (especially around Lisbon), but the north of the country still presented an agrarian economy organized along the *sesmaria* system and the south, since the wars of *Reconquista*, was held by Christian military orders, whose *sesmarias* were manned by Muslim peasants. This landed class, largely dominant in the north and in the south, constituted the main source of political support for the first Aviz king, John I (Birmingham, 1993, p. 20; Oliveira Marques, 1976, p. 178).

Although John I was proclaimed king of Portugal in 1385, the disputes for the throne lasted until 1411 when a peace settlement was signed with the neighbouring kingdom of Castile. However, the centralisation of political power in the king would only become a reality under the reign of John II (1481-1495) (Disney, 2009a, p. 136). The 15th century in Portugal is the period in which the new monarchy, under the Aviz dynasty, is constantly struggling to secure its power – be it against Castilian or the Portuguese nobility. In the aftermath of this long war against Castile, the crown faced an oversized aristocracy composed not only by the traditional feudal lords aiming to keep (and expand) their privileges as a reward for their support in the wars of succession, but also by the noble/merchant class that expected the crown to further expand its trade activity. Accumulation and expansion presented themselves as necessary, but not as an end in themselves, nor to satiate a broader European market-necessity. As Disney puts it:

“João I faced the same dilemma in regard to the nobility as had so tried his Burgundian predecessors. How could royal authority be sustained in the teeth of local particularisms, or the royal estate be protected against persistent encroachments? Nobles who espoused João’s cause naturally expected to keep their rights and privileges intact – and indeed looked for additional land grants and rewards (...) Two important developments in the second decade of the 15th century each played a major role in bringing about this change: peace with Castile and expansion into Morocco from 1415.” (Disney, 2009a, pp. 126–127)

In this context, the territorial expansion set in motion by the strategy of geopolitical accumulation in the Portuguese *Reconquista* wars (and whose interruption was one of the ingredients of the feudal crisis in the 14th century) was given continuity in the 15th century, being carried over to Africa in the conquest of Ceuta in 1415. It was strongly sponsored by John’s son, Henry, known as “the navigator”, and would only be widely supported by the nobility under Afonso V, from 1446 onwards (Disney, 2009b, pp. 1–6). Across the 15th century, with the first *feitorias* being established in the African coast and the colonisation of Madeira, Portugal began trading pepper, ivory and gold into Northern Europe, through Flanders and Bruges. With the rise of the

“golden age” (mid-1490s to early 1540s), Portugal quickly established a monopoly on African and Asian goods, such as pepper, cinnamon and porcelain, as well as a on slave trade (Disney, 2009a, pp. 143–147).

The social and geopolitical conditions which made Portuguese expansionism viable can be found in the outcomes of the Portuguese response to the feudal crisis and of the rise of the Aviz dynasty. The reproduction of those conditions by the continued struggle in Portuguese nobility throughout the 15th century, eventually made it necessary. It was in this context that in 1500 the expedition led by Pedro Álvares Cabral reaches, even if by mistake, the shores of South America where today lies the city of Porto Seguro, in Brazil, bringing together two very distinct social realities in the colonial encounter.

The Arrival of the Portuguese in America and the First Stage of Colonisation: 1500 - 1580

Seventy years passed between the first Portuguese expeditions to reach South-American shores and the establishment of a secure colony in Brazil. At the dawn of the 16th century Portuguese merchants had control over the trade route to India circling the African continent, which provided a large part of the Crown’s income. There was, therefore, little incentive for exploring such a vast new territory, which, unlike that which fell on the Spanish side of the Tordesillas line³⁹, did not appear to provide an

³⁹ The treaty of Tordesillas (1494) between Portugal and Castile/Spain established a line 370 miles West of Cape Verde. All discoveries to the west of that line would belong to latter, and those between that line and the coast of Africa would be Portuguese. This secured Portugal’s monopoly of the African Atlantic trade and of the Cape route to India, and was also an important step in establishing a peaceful coexistence of the two Iberian Empires, by establishing their separate regions of colonial domain (Disney, 2009b, pp. 47–49, 2009a, p. 152). Although this agreement on the Western border of Brazilian territory was accepted by Portuguese and Spanish alike, its enforcement was very difficult due to the difficulties in measuring that line accurately. As a result, Portuguese settlement and exploration went far beyond that line in some areas, such as following the coast to the south and inland through the Amazonas. Also, the legality of the treaty was heavily disputed by French lawyers. (Johnson, 1987, pp. 9–11)

The treaty was an outcome of legal disputes between the two crowns, which had been lobbying for an intervention by the Pope to establish which trade routes would be monopolised by each side since the 1450s. Contrary to the Schmittian argument, then, this moment cannot be held as the birth of a *jus publicum Europaeum* understood as “a law among states” (Schmitt, 2006, p. 126–9; 49), nor as *nomos* of land appropriation in which the oceans remain *res omnium* (Balakrishnan, 2011, pp. 65–6). Rather, the division of the Atlantic during this era of maritime expansionism was still inscribed in the *cosmos* of the *res publica Christiana*, and, as a form of geopolitical accumulation, it must be understood within the scope of the social relations that made it possible – both within these kingdoms and between their explorers and the populations encountered in the Americas (Teschke, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c).

immediate source of wealth. The Crown's only immediate priority was to secure the shore, exploring it through the system of trading factories in strategic points along the coast, as that already established on the African continent during the 15th century. The resources available to Portugal, however, were not enough to patrol the coast – considering the same strategy was being adopted at the same time around Africa and in the Indian Ocean – and prevent a strong French presence in Brazilwood trade. The French took advantage from the length of the coast to avoid Portuguese trading points and deal directly with the natives. To enforce their monopoly secured in Tordesillas, the Portuguese recognised that not only a stronger naval presence in the South American coast would be needed, but also permanent occupation of the territory. For those purposes, a new expedition was sent by the king in 1530:

“By 1530 João III and his advisers concluded that some kind of permanent colony would have to be planted in Brazil. This is one of the meanings of the expedition of Martim Afonso de Sousa (1530-3). His fleet of five ships carrying some 400 settlers really had three discernible aims (...). Sousa's first charge – to patrol the coast – reveals that the crown had still not completely abandoned the view that the defence of its Brazilian interest was largely a question of cleaning the seas of unlicensed ships, while his second charge – to establish a royal colony (São Vicente, 1532) through revocable (not hereditary) landgrants to settlers – adumbrates the emergence of a new policy in Brazil; lastly, in preparation for settlement, the expedition was instructed to explore the mouths of the Amazon and La Plata rivers to determine, among other things, their proximity to the meridian of Tordesillas.” (Johnson, 1987, p. 12)

From 1532 onwards, the *sesmaria* system of landgrants is expanded from the village of São Vicente to the whole of what was Brazilian territory at that time (as per the Treaty of Tordesillas). The rights of settlement and exploration of Portuguese territorial possessions in the American continent were divided as “gifts” (*doação*) between twelve members of lower nobility (as more powerful nobles were interested in owning land at home, or in more lucrative outposts in India), which were expected to proceed with the occupation of the territory by their own means. In terms of rights and obligations towards the Crown, the “donatary captains” *capitães donatários*, as they became known, were very similar to those of the Portuguese lordship (*senhorio*) at home⁴⁰. As such, they had taxation rights over all the economic activity in the land under their control, plus a share on the taxes charged by the Crown itself. Moreover, they were granted seigniorial rights such as appointing all subordinate officials in the captaincy (*capitania*); civil and criminal jurisdiction (except for certain cases that were still reserved for the crown); the right to sub-grant the land to colonists with the

⁴⁰ The division of captaincies during the 16th century can be seen in Map 1, in the Annex.

obligation to establish some economic activity within five years. They were also in charge of military command of their captaincies, having the right to form militias to defend their land (Johnson, 1987, pp. 13–14; Teixeira da Silva, 1990, p. 31).

In most captaincies this policy of landgrants did not result in the establishment of permanent settlements. That is because in most of them economic activity remained attached to the extraction of Brazilwood and to the search for bullion (which remained unfruitful so far). Only in a minority (especially Pernambuco and São Vicente) permanent occupation took place before 1550. In these, donatary captains had decided to initiate agricultural production, as in the other Portuguese colonies in the Atlantic. The main difficulties concerning this initial occupation were to find willing settlers (most were prisoners in exile, or, as it became increasingly popular throughout the period, African slaves), and capital to finance the trips and material goods needed. The latter was often overcome with the help of loans from merchants and bankers, either from Lisbon, Genoa, or Florence (Jaguaribe, 1969, p. 126; Johnson, 1987, pp. 3–4, 16–7; Teixeira da Silva, 1990, p. 30).

A third difficulty, however, often proved to be the greatest: conflict with American native tribes. Regardless of their relative failure or success in establishing a permanent settlement in Brazilian territory, these initiatives promoted during the 1530s changed the terms of the encounter between Europeans and Americans. Permanent settlement required a more extensive occupation of territory as the previous forms of contact did (especially in cases where plantations were being established), and the responses coming from each native tribe varied widely. In the regions where conflict escalated, it was mostly due to the attempts to enslave the natives and put them to work in the plantations, and to the interferences represented by these plantations and settlement in the natives' cycle of migration. By the end of the 1540s, the Portuguese occupation in some captaincies had been effectively wiped out by American resistance (as in Bahia and São Tomé), or at least severely hindered (such as Espírito Santo and Porto Seguro) (Johnson, 1987, pp. 16–18).

These conflicts against natives culminated on the death of Bahia's donatary captain in a conflict against Tupinambá natives. That attested to the failure of the existing policy of occupation, and led the crown to play a bigger role in settling the territory. It bought back the rights over some of these failed captaincies (but maintained their existence as administrative divisions under donatary captains appointed by the crown), and created the position of General Governor, through which

Portuguese policy for Brazil was centralised from 1548 onwards. It was only through the action of these governors, especially Mem de Sá (1557 – 1572), that Portuguese control over the territory was consolidated. This success can be attributed to the solutions found for the two main threats: the Natives and the French. Conflict with the former was greatly reduced by the intensification of African slavery, which diminished the need for capturing Indians and forcing them to work⁴¹; as well as to the presence of Jesuit missionaries, which forcefully converted large numbers to Christendom and to the European lifestyle. The French, on the other hand, had at this point established their own colony – *France Antarctique* – on the northern area of the São Vicente captaincy. For five years the Portuguese, under the General Governor Mem de Sá, and the French forces, headed by Nicolas Durand de Villegagnon, battled for the control of the region, until the final defeat of the former in 1565 and the establishment of a military outpost where currently lies the city of Rio de Janeiro⁴² (Blackburn, 2010, pp. 164–8; Johnson, 1987, pp. 19–28; Teixeira da Silva, 1990, pp. 32–40).

The French Threat to the Portuguese Monopoly in the South Atlantic

French privateer activity in Portuguese trade routes had been a constant since the very early days of European exploration of America. How they came to be such a threat to Portuguese colonisation of Brazil is well captured in the following passage:

“More important in the long run than Spanish probing around the fringes of Brazil was French poaching on the dyewood trade. (...) it was growing, led by merchants operating out of northern French ports in Normandy and Brittany. A French ship intent upon breaking into the India trade had, like Cabral, drifted off course onto the coast of Brazil in 1504, where it remained to load dyewood instead and then returned to Honfleur. Appetites whetted, French merchants from other ports (Dieppe, Rouen, Fécamp) began to seek dyewood in Brazil. They made no attempt to establish factories after the Portuguese pattern, but traded directly from their ships, sending agents to live among the Indians, with whom good relations were developed. Not only did French competition deprive the Portuguese crown of revenue, but it lowered the price of brazilwood by increasing supplies on the Antwerp market. In addition, French seizures of Portuguese ships drove up costs to such a point that fewer and fewer merchants were willing to risk involvement in the trade.” (Johnson, 1987, p. 10)

⁴¹ Indian slavery was forbidden by a royal decree of King Sebastião in 1570, except for two situations: in the event of a “just war” called by the King or the Governor, or if the Indian in question is a cannibal. They were instead placed under the protection of the Jesuits, who would “teach” them their way of life (*i.e.*, living in towns, abandoning polygamy, learning a trade) and, when ready, deploy them to work for wages in neighbouring estates. The low wages and the lack of differentiation between free and enslaved natives often prompted natives to escape and return to their original tribes (Blackburn, 2010, pp. 166–7; Johnson, 1987, p. 26).

⁴² One of the very interesting aspects of the conflict between the Portuguese and the French for the colonisation of Brazil is their legal discussion about the right to colonise that territory. However, despite its brief discussion on the literature used here, it falls beyond the scope of this chapter.

In the second and third decades of the 16th century Portugal patrols more intensely its routes in the South Atlantic and the Brazilian coast. Accordingly, there is also an intensified presence of French corsairs⁴³ which seizes an average of twenty ships per year in the 1520s (Johnson, 1987, pp. 10–11). The possibility of losing its colonial possession in face of this competition drove the Portuguese king to change the policy of Brazilian colonisation, opting to establish a permanent settlement (Johnson, 1987, p. 12). A few decades later, a similar strategy is adopted by French merchants, with support of their king, Henry II, but with a different initial purpose. In Villegagnon's initial plan for *France Antarctique* the colony's main purpose was religious: a product of the prosecution of Catholic reformists in Europe in mid-16th century (Johnson, 1987, p. 28; Lestringan, 2008, p. 104). The defeat of this occupation by the Portuguese forces of Mem de Sá is an important turning point in guaranteeing the Portuguese colonisation of Brazil, and its profit with Brazilwood trade. An important outcome of this struggle for settlement in South America is the transition towards the sugar economy, which, exacerbated the conflict with Natives for land and stimulates the adoption of African slavery.

The Native Americans as a Threat to Portuguese Colonisation

The initial contact between Portuguese explorers and native Americans, during the first thirty years of the 16th century, did not lead to large-scale conflict between the two groups, at least not to a point of disrupting the trade of Brazilwood significantly. The situation changed when the Portuguese initiated their attempts of settlement, mainly for two reasons. Firstly, this meant an intervention in the relationship established by the Natives between their tribes and the land they occupied, their migratory patterns, and their sense of territoriality. Secondly, because sugar mills and sugarcane plantations require a labour force that was not available to the occupying settlers at the time. While the Tupi were familiar with cutting down trees (which made them suitable for Brazilwood trade), the work on agriculture was reserved to women in their society, so that men refused to do it (Blackburn, 2010, p.

⁴³ Johnson (1987) uses the term "piracy" to refer to the activity of those to whom he previously referred as "privateers", ignoring the legal distinction between the two. Bicalho (2008), however, notices the difference and establishes Villegagnon's role as that of a corsair.

165; Johnson, 1987, p. 17). The settlers soon started to enslave Natives to work in sugarcane plantations, which became a major source of conflict between natives and settlers, and remained such for a long period. Initially, the Portuguese managed to keep a superiority in these conflicts through their more advanced warfare technology (gunpowder against the Natives' arrows), and by playing the different tribes against each other, benefitting from their rivalries (Corrêa do Lago, 2014, p. 30; Johnson, 1987, p. 18). However, in most areas they were still greatly outnumbered, and Native resistance managed to wipe out the regions of Bahia and São Tomé in the 1540s. By 1548, in a letter to the king, the brother of the donatary captain of São Tomé writes: "If Your Highness does not shortly aid these captaincies and coast of Brazil (...) You will lose the land." (Blackburn, 2010, p. 166; Johnson, 1987, p. 19)

His plead was heard by the king, and Portugal sent military support to drive back the Tupinambá in Bahia with the first General Governor, Tomé de Sousa (1549-53). However, military strength was only part of the solution. Royal policy actually made a distinction between "bellicose Indians", against whom "just wars" could be waged resulting in their enslavement; and the "peaceful Indians", who were to be protected, converted into Christendom through the work of the missionary order of the Jesuits, and admitted into Portuguese society as serfs. This led to a dispute between settlers and Jesuits, for the activity of the latter effectively reduced the former's pool of potential slaves. The main expression of this dispute was through administration rights over the villages (*aldeias*) where Jesuits conducted the conversion of Natives (Johnson, 1987, pp. 20–24). The Native population was effectively annihilated not only by warfare, but also by the diseases imported from Europe with which they had never had any contact. Those who survived were acculturated by the Jesuits, thus effectively eliminating the Natives as a threat to Portuguese control over Brazil (Hemming, 1987, p. 147; Johnson, 1987, p. 27; Teixeira da Silva, 1990, p. 34). The religious aspect is essential to understand how the Americans as constructed as "others", and how, in relation to this other, the superiority of Europeans is established⁴⁴. As shown by Todorov (1999), one of the most important components of the "conquest" of America was the destruction of the natives' symbols. The articulation of a system of signs for conquest he identifies in Cortés and Las Casas is

⁴⁴ The journals of Columbus, for instance, make it clear that the main motivation for his voyages was the expansion of the Catholic world, and that riches accumulated in the process should be used in the holy war for Jerusalem (Todorov, 1999, pp. 8–13)

very similar to that employed by the Portuguese General Governors in Brazil (especially Tomé de Souza and Mem de Sá) and the Jesuits.

However, this is a process which takes place throughout the 16th and 17th centuries. The short-term factor that allows for the prosperity of settlement in Brazil from mid-16th century is the reliance on human trafficking, that is, the use of African labour force as slaves. There are many estimates of how many Africans were brought to Brazil as slaves in late 16th century (1550-1600), all ranging between 50 and 100 thousand. The population of African slaves went from 3,000 in 1570 to 9,000-10,000 in 1590 and to 12,000-15,000 by 1600 (Blackburn, 2010, p. 168; Corrêa do Lago, 2014, p. 34; Teixeira da Silva, 1990, p. 21). The Portuguese Empire had previous experiences with implementing slave-based production in Atlantic islands using African slaves, which provided the labour force that allowed the expansion of the sugar economy, and, in fact, as the trade of African slaves was already dominated by Portuguese traders, the influx of slaves into Brazil was much more intense than that to other American colonies. In some estates the number of Black workers already outnumbered that of Indians by 1570 (Blackburn, 2010, pp. 168–170; Johnson, 1987, p. 26; Klein and Luna, 2010, p. 21). Therefore, the rise of a ‘mode of exploitation’⁴⁵ based on the “import” of African slaves (that is, human trafficking) must be understood in the context of the search for an alternative to the enslavement of Natives, which was the source of a conflict that proved to be the major threat for the Portuguese crown in Brazil.

This contextualised perspective also questions the essentialist division of labour established by Latin American Post-Colonialists, according to which the different productive roles were distributed along ethnic lines. Contrary to what Quijano affirms (Quijano, 2000, pp. 534–540, 2008, pp. 181–8), the attribution of labour regimes is not directly a result of the classification of those populations in different races, but the outcome of historically contingent social disputes. The establishment of African slavery in America was a response to the resistance of American Natives to enslavement, and to the Catholic prohibition to their enslavement, which was part of

⁴⁵ Following the argument presented by Ellen Wood (Wood, 1995, pp. 23–31), my Political Marxist account does not intend to establish and reinforce a separation between an objective economic structure and its social, juridical and political forms – that is, between the “economic” and the “political”, or between “base” and “superstructure”. Rather, it identifies that separation as a singular trait of the rise of capitalism and aims to criticise those whose account rely on the naturalisation and de-historicisation of such divide. For this reason, ‘mode of exploitation’ seems more adequate than ‘mode of production’.

its own geopolitical religious dispute and generated conflict between colonizers (the religious orders and the plantation landlords). The Eurocentric epistemology of races is itself an outcome of such social and geopolitical disputes, and cannot replace those as the core of a historical and sociological account of colonialism.

By the end of the 16th century, Portuguese colonisation gave birth to a slave-based set of social relations, which, through its reproduction and contestation in the following centuries, would prove to be the most enduring legacy of colonialism in Brazil. This section showed how it resulted from the initial extractivist and commercial pattern of Portuguese colonialism. The next step of an overall assessment of Brazilian colonial period is to look at the role of the sugar economy in shaping the socio-political environment of Brazil and its geopolitical place in the Portuguese Empire in the 17th century.

The “Sugar Cycle”: Slave labour, Plantations and the Dutch-Portuguese War – 1580 - 1690

If the history of early colonisation is marked by how the relationship between the Portuguese and their American territory became one of territorial occupation, we now trace how this form of territorial occupation plays into the nature and dynamics of the Portuguese Empire and into European (geo)politics at large. According to Caio Prado Jr., it becomes a history of the “meaning of colonisation” (Prado Jr., 2011, p. 15)

From the 1580s, with the colony safely established⁴⁶, sugar production increased dramatically based on the increased value of the commodity in European markets, and on the expansion of the slave-based production in Brazil. It follows from the argument of this thesis that the historical peculiarity of colonial Brazil is intimately related to the manner in which these two factors (the tensions inherent in the social relations of production based on slavery, and the pressures emanating from the

⁴⁶ There are other French outposts in the Brazilian coast throughout the 17th century, and a high participation of French, English and Dutch in trade activity (both as licensed by Portuguese merchants and illegally), but the relationship between colony and metropolis is not questioned in the same way. There are other challenges to Portuguese authority over Brazilian territory and the sea routes between Lisbon and South America, such as the Dutch-Portuguese war, but the terms of geopolitical engagement are different as that authority is now accepted as the original *status quo* of the dispute. (Mauro, 1987, pp. 44, 56–57).

European commercial and geopolitical disputes for colonies) interact along this period. The social and geopolitical context of sugar production in late 16th and 17th century is crucial for the developments in both Brazil and Portugal in the period. This context, in which that mode of exploitation was created, was explored above, with the property relations on land (the *sesmarias* and hereditary captaincies) and the adoption of African slavery being highlighted. We now turn to an analysis of the operation of this mode of exploitation, or rather, of its reproduction throughout the 17th century.

The identification of the “mode of production” in sugar plantations in colonial Brazil brought intense debate within Brazilian Marxism in the 1930s: the two main participants of that debate proposing the colonial particularity as a form of feudalism (Sodré, 1979, 2002) and as a form of capitalism (Prado Jr., 1947, 2011). Sodré identifies in the fragmented territorial authority of landowners in hereditary captaincies and *sesmarias* a similar set of social relations as that of pre-capitalist Europe⁴⁷. Caio Prado Jr., on the other hand, looks for a long-term analysis of the colonial period, keeping in mind its outcomes after the independence in early 19th

⁴⁷ Sodré’s argument for a Brazilian feudalism relies on the image of the *sesmaria* as a feudal form of land property, which is based on his reading of the first letter of donation (*carta de doação*), from 1534. According to him, the document reveals clear elements of feudal law, by establishing the donatary as “a king in his captaincy” (Sodré, 1979, p. 78). That is, in his view, the use of the land through the grant of a *sesmaria* by one of the donatary captains does not characterise property because such form of land use is still subjected to the personal will of the donatary captain in the use of the right granted to him by the king to make land concessions. However, such view is contested by other scholars. Caio Prado Jr., for instance, depicts the *sesmaria* system as one of “fully allodial property”, as was necessary for the commercial aims of Portuguese colonisation (Prado Jr., 2012, p. 33). Gorender adds that, although Sodré seems to be right in his analysis of the norm itself as feudal, there was a long distance that separated it (both literally and metaphorically) from the practice of land property in Brazil. He highlights that while the *sesmarias* law from 1375 indeed maintained all feudal ties existing over the land, in the case of Brazil, there were no *pre-existing* feudal rights over the land that could be maintained (Gorender, 1978, pp. 364–8). As a result, he concludes “*sesmarias* were granted in Brazil without obligations created by lordly ties. Caio Prado Junior was entirely right when describing the property instituted by *sesmarias* in Brazil as *allodial*, not containing any aspects of personal dependency between the *sesmeiro* and the donatary captain (...). As a result, in its legal aspects, the form of land property established in Brazil since its early days was notably different from that which existed in Portugal, for not presenting the feudal traits of the latter.” (Gorender, 1978, p. 369).

All of their accounts converge in one important point: the large land property, the *latifúndio*, was one of the pillars of economic activity in colonial Brazil. This can be taken as an element in favour of the interpretation of the *sesmarias* as a feudal title. However, as noted by Smith (2008, pp. 159–60), the process through which these large properties are formed takes place in opposition to the legal statute of the Portuguese crown, which always aimed at limiting their size. According to him: “the rule of great properties was always tied to local acts of force and power in the private sphere, and to omission from the public sphere, caught in its own bureaucratic maze” (Smith, 2008, p. 160). In other words, these landowners never rely on the state to recognise their property rights, but, in opposition, it is the state that relies on the local authorities of these landowners for the exercise of its power. In sum, even if political authority in the Portuguese Empire was highly centralised on the figure of the sovereign and their close councillors and ministers, in practice, the political structure in colonial Brazil relied on the local and private authorities of individual *latifundiários*. Therefore, the state in colonial Brazil presented traits of parcelised political authority, even in the absence of feudal relations of vassalage.

century. It is only from this long-term analysis that its *meaning* becomes visible. And while his use of the term “meaning” (as in “the meaning of colonisation”) might echo a structuralist hegelianism, it regards the notion that no historical process or event can be held entirely on its own, without appearing also as a link in some broader historical chain.

“(…) Portuguese colonisation in America is not an isolated fact, an unprecedented nor unequalled adventure of a particularly entrepreneurial nation; nor, even, a sequence of facts, parallel to other similar ones, but totally independent from them. It is part of a whole, and it is incomplete without a vision of this whole. However, as part of a whole it is often also disguised under ideas that we hold as too clear to require any explanation – which are nothing but the result of old habits of thought. We are so used to dealing with the Brazilian colonisation that its initiative, its inspiring and determining motifs, and the paths towards which these have led it are all lost. It appears as a fatal and necessary event, derived naturally and spontaneously from the mere fact of ‘discovery’. The paths it took are also presented exclusively as a result of this fact. We forget all the background accumulated behind them, and the great number of particular circumstances that dictate the rules to be followed. The consideration of this background and these particularities, in this case, is just as necessary as (or perhaps even more than) all those initial and remote circumstances and the traits they inscribe into Portuguese colonisation, which are deeply and indelibly present in the formation and evolution of the country.” (Prado Jr., 2011, p. 17)⁴⁸

By adopting a more historicised approach than Sodré, Caio Prado Jr. denies the existence of a feudal or semi-feudal mode of production in Brazil. Instead, he sees monoculture plantations based on slave labour as a peculiar mode of production on its own terms, calling it a “colonial mode of production” (Mendes, 2013, pp. 205–6; Prado Jr., 1947, p. 4). The existing circumstances that attract the effort of colonial occupation and organisation of production are very different from those existing in the case of temperate colonies in the northern hemisphere, for instance. While in the latter case migration is stimulated by religious persecution and by the social transformations of 16th century Britain, the former is only attractive to those who can mobilise a large productive capacity (in terms of labour and capital) in order to produce a vast surplus to be sold in Europe. While the second creates a society of small landowners (initially, at least), the first creates a society divided between a small landed oligarchy and a mass of dispossessed workers, mostly slaves, who are not even recognised as part of that society (Prado Jr., 2011, pp. 25–27).

For Caio Prado Jr., then, the “colonial mode of production” is the result of a peculiar form of colonialism geared towards production for export – which presupposes the existence of a market logic overlooking the social and geopolitical

⁴⁸ Translated from the original in Portuguese.

processes of accumulation and expansion. Ultimately, it could be said that the particularity of the colonial legacy lies in the way it is connected to global capitalism, which results in argument close to that of World-Systems Theory. By highlighting the specificity of modern slavery in Brazil, Jacob Gorender (1978) departs from the structuralism portrayed by Prado Jr.. While the latter understands this form of colonialism as a result of capitalist market pressures, the former points at the rise of a “colonial slave-based mode of production” as a result of the colonial encounter. In his words:

“It follows that the colonial slave-based mode of production cannot be understood as a synthesis between pre-existent modes of production, in the case of Brazil. Its rise does not find roots in the unilateral directions of either evolutionism or diffusionism. This does not mean that the colonial slavery was an arbitrary invention outside any kind of historical conditioning. Quite the opposite, colonial slavery was created and developed under socio-economical determinants rigorously defined in both time and space. Of this determinism of complex factors emerges the colonial slavery as a *new* mode of production, with characteristics previously non-existent in human history. It was not a repetition of or a return to classic slavery (which would be the ‘regular’ sequence to primitive communism), as it was no result of a mere combination between the traits of the social formations of the 16th century Portuguese and the indigenous tribes. The study of the structure and dynamic of the colonial slave-based mode of production (...) will reveal (...) that it was a *historically new mode of production*.” (Gorender, 1978, pp. 54–5)⁴⁹

Therefore, by further historicising Prado Jr.’s argument, Gorender claims that this colonial “mode of production” must be understood as a social form of its own, and not as an expression of capitalism. However, he still relies heavily on socio-economic structural determinism, looking for the roots of this particularity in the determinations of the social structures in the colonial encounter. In my own iteration of the argument, it becomes necessary to move away from this reification of social structures⁵⁰. For this reason, instead of defining “modes” of social interactions, I stress the open-ended character of such interactions how their outcomes (often unintended) lead to transformations in each particular (*i.e.*, temporally and geographically specific) set of social relations. An example of this deeply historicised method can be seen in the preceding section, linking, for instance, the adoption of African slavery to the struggles

⁴⁹ Translated from the original in Portuguese.

⁵⁰ However, I do not claim to be the first one to do so. Besides the arguments discussed above, both Marxists and non-Marxists have moved away from the orthodox structuralist teleology of the classic social sciences. For instance, Gorender (1978) moves in that direction by describing colonial Brazil through the peculiar mode of production of colonial slavery, while Decio Saes (1990) does so by rethinking the notion of the “bourgeois state” and its role in the transition towards capitalism. Others go even further by questioning the limits of notions such as “mode of production” and “bourgeois state” (de Azevedo, 1987; Franco, 1997; Motta, 1998). In the case of this thesis, I am pushing for a historicist reading of social and geopolitical agency to be built into the account of state-formation, as explained on Chapter 2.

between settlers, the church, and American natives. By applying the same method to the analysis of slave-based sugar production in the 17th century it is possible to have a better notion of how these social processes influence Brazil in the long term, rather than being relegated to a “dead past”, as part of a structure that was overcome in a single moment of transition.

From 1580 onwards it should be added that the union of Portugal and Spain under the Habsburg dynasty helped increase the use of Black labour, as the stronger influence of religious orders in the Spanish Empire led them to be more restrained in regards to the enslavement of Native Americans. The increase in sugar production in early 17th century was followed by an even greater expansion of slave traffic. As Table I shows below, the number of mills nearly doubles between the 1580s and the early 1600s, while the number of slaves brought from Africa increases more than three times in the same period. The average yearly amount of “imported” slaves went from around 4,000 in the first half of the 17th century, to 7,000-8,000 in 1650s and 1660s, peaking just below 20,000 in the 1620s (Klein and Luna, 2010, pp. 21–22; Mauro, 1987, p. 55). It is also important to add that, unlike what happened to Indians, there was no combined effort from the Empire to integrate this population of African origin in the society. Instead, all kinds of social and community ties were denied to them, other than their very status of slaves (Klein and Luna, 2010, pp. 3, 21).

One of the main forms of slave resistance in all American continent was escaping the domains of their respective masters, and the vastness of Brazilian territory facilitated that practice. Communities of escaped slaves, *quilombos*, existed throughout the territory. Their aim was normally to simply continue life as peasants⁵¹, but in order to make this existence possible they often needed to raid plantation areas for supplies or tools, which provoked retaliation. As a result, plantation owners would normally employ local militia groups or even paid mercenaries to hunt down these communities and recapture their members back into slavery. Despite these “internal wars”, across the 17th century large groups of these communities were established, such as Palmares and Campo Grande, which lasted for many decades (Klein and Luna, 2010, pp. 194–6; Martins, 2008, pp. 287–363). If the relation between slaves and masters was mediated by “extra-economic coercion” – that is, violence – across the

⁵¹ Only in rare occasions did such groups join or initiate rebellious movements against the established order.

17th and 18th centuries the repetition of this pattern creates an important aspect of the colonial period. The violent and militarised way in which class conflict manifests itself in Brazilian society is, therefore, one of the strongest legacies of colonialism in Brazil.

At the same time, their work on sugar plantations and mills generated vast profits for the landowners, who sold the sugar in Europe. According to calculations made by Furtado, in the early days of the 17th century the yearly income of sugar production could amount to £2.5 million, of which 90 per cent would be concentrated in the hands of sugar mill and plantation owners (Furtado, 1963, pp. 46–48). It is hard to find reliable demographic data about the period, but the estimates of 30,000 whites (for a total of 100,000 when including slaves and converted Indians (Corrêa do Lago, 2014, p. 33) allow us to picture this society as strongly divided between a very powerful elite and a significant amount of dispossessed workers. This notion is strengthened by data from the Dutch administration of Pernambuco, which reveals a total value of luxury imports reaching £800,000 in a single year. Considering their operational costs, even with such high level of consumption there is still reason to believe that these plantations generated enough income to double their productive capacity every two years, and the peak growth rates seem to confirm that (Furtado, 1963, pp. 48–49). The table below also gives a sense of the order of magnitude of the sugar trade in the period:

Table I – The Brazilian Sugar Economy

Year	Number of Mills	Amount of sugar exported (in arrobas ⁵²)	Value in British pounds	Value in grams of gold
1560-1570	60	160,000	270,406	1,960,000
1580	118	350,000	528,181	2,867,500
1600	200	1,200,000	2,258,300	16,536,000
1650	300	2,100,000	3,765,620	27,537,000
1710	650	1,600,000	1,726,230	12,640,000
1760	-	2,500,000	2,379,710	17,425,000
1806	-	1,500,000	665,774	4,875,000
1822	-	4,790,000	2,184,910	15,996,600

⁵² Around 15kg

1831	-	5,200,000	1,903,220	13,936,000
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(Simonsen, 1957, p. 114 cited in Jaguaribe, 1969, p. 128)

The Dutch played a fundamental role in the sugar trade. Due to the weakness of Portuguese mercantile bourgeoisie, most of the productive investment for Brazilian sugar mills came through Dutch traders and bankers. Besides, Antwerp was the main trading point for the Portuguese trading companies that held a monopoly over the commerce of Brazilian sugar. At the same time, the Low Countries were waging their wars of independence against the Habsburg Empire, which after 1580 also included Portugal. However, it is only after the end of the twelve-year truce (1621) that the fleets of the Dutch trading companies start attacking Portuguese trading posts in Asia, Africa and America. The Dutch-Portuguese war, as this became known, carried on after the restoration of Portugal's independence from Spain with the rise of the Bragança dynasty in Lisbon (1640), and normal trade relations were only re-established in the 1660s (Mauro, 1987, pp. 47–48).

This long period of warfare brought three important consequences for the geopolitical development of Brazil. Firstly, the territorial losses of the Portuguese Empire in Asia⁵³ eliminated the influence it had in the trade of spices, which vastly increased the importance of Brazil for the Crown's revenue (Teixeira da Silva, 1990, p. 45). Secondly, in order to support the costs of war, and with the disruption of its sugar monopoly due to the Dutch occupation of northeast Brazil (from 1624 to 1654), Portugal took refuge in an alliance with Britain, which played an important role in securing the throne for the Bragança, by forging an alliance and a privileged trade relation with Portugal and its colonies in a series of treaties in 1642, 1654 and 1661 (Furtado, 1963, p. 34; Mauro, 1987, p. 52). Thirdly, after the defeat of the Dutch occupation (thanks to a popular revolt in Pernambuco that triggered a civil war in 1645 (Disney, 2009b, pp. 228–232) the appearance of sugar plantations in Dutch colonies in the Caribbean undermined significantly the Portuguese monopoly and caused a decline in the income of sugar plantations from the 1640s onwards which led to the

⁵³ The Portuguese were expelled from Hurmuz, Sri Lanka, Mombasa and Melaka between the 1620s and 1640s, due to direct conflicts against the Dutch trading companies, or in conflicts in which the latter fuelled local resistances against Portuguese presence. In the 1650s, Portuguese fortresses on the Kanara coast are seized with Dutch backing, and Goa suffers with invasion and revolts. In the 1660s, the Portuguese fortresses in Kerala fall to Dutch control (Disney, 2009b, pp. 168–171).

end of the first “cycle” of Brazilian colonial economy. Although the merchants’ profits were still substantial, the 1680s showed clear signs of depression, such as a decrease in slave traffic and diversification of the production (Mauro, 1987, p. 56).

The Gold Cycle

The crisis of the 1680s was shortened thanks to the discovery of substantial amounts of gold in the interior of the continent in the 1690s. Many expeditions were sent, especially from the São Vicente and Rio de Janeiro captaincies, to explore the land in the 17th century. The first conclusive finding of a substantially rich mining region came in 1694, in the region that quickly became known as “general mines” (*Minas Gerais*). It initiated a migratory movement towards these mining regions, away from the coast, which led to significant social transformations in the colony’s social and economic structure. It also had a strong impact on the Portuguese economy, undermining industrialisation efforts and reinforcing the old colonial system based on taxation (and directly coercive rather than market-mediated means of accumulation), which led to a gradual increase of Portugal’s unequal trade relations with, and geopolitical dependency on Britain (Arruda, 1991, p. 385; Mauro, 1987, p. 69). Finally, another mark of the period is the strengthening of the Crown’s taxation policies in a constant struggle to avoid smuggling; this led to a point where, after the decline in gold production in the 1750s, it generated the social unrest among the white settlers that fuelled the first independence movements against Lisbon in Brazilian territory.

As shown in Table I above, the early years of the 18th century saw a drastic reduction in sugar exports. One of the main reasons for this is the shift of colonial productive capacities to the mining regions in the same period. In Bahia, mining was prohibited in the region around Salvador in order to prevent a reduction of the population in the colony’s capital, which could make it vulnerable to foreign invasion or slave insurgence (Russell-Wood, 1987, p. 194). There was a fear that mining would disrupt the social order in the colony, and indeed, it can be said to have done so to a degree. The increased population in the interior changed the internal distribution of demand for foodstuffs, which resulted in increased prices and starvation in the sugar-producing regions in the northeast. Also, miners were competing with sugar planters in the purchase of slaves, which increased the cost and severely decreased the quality

of the labour force available for plantations, deepening their crisis. These issues caused tension between landlords from the traditional sugar plantation regions (mostly around Pernambuco and Bahia) and those in the interior of the continent, in more recently settled mining areas. Although it never escalated to direct conflict, it influenced trade and fiscal policies (Russell-Wood, 1987, pp. 194–5).

It is hard to have a clear sense of how many people migrated to the west; but the creation of the new captaincies of Minas Gerais (1720), Goiás (1740) and Mato Grosso (1748) evidence the administrative effort by the Crown to keep a stronger control over the activities in those regions (Mauro, 1987, p. 62). Even before, the creation of townships (*vilas*) in Minas Gerais, such as Ouro Preto, Sabará and São João Del Rei (1713) already represented an attempt to establish the rule of the Portuguese monarchy over the mines⁵⁴ (Russell-Wood, 1987, p. 213). According to Russell-Wood:

“The most evident characteristic of the emerging society of Minas Gerais, Mato Grosso, and Goiás was its ‘instant’ quality. In 1695 the population of the highland region of Brazil comprised assorted groups of bandeirantes, occasional cattle ranchers, a handful of missionaries, some speculators, and the Indians. Within less than two decades complete townships had been established and the bureaucratic machinery of government had begun to function. In human terms (and those figures which are available are as scarce as they are selective) in Minas Gerais the number of black slaves alone increased from zero to about 30,000 in the same period. The pattern was repeated elsewhere. By 1726 the population of Cuiabá was 7,000. Within three years of the first strikes in Minas Novas, the estimated population was 40,000, including whites and enormous numbers of black slaves.” (Russell-Wood, 1987, p. 213)

The growth of state bureaucracy around mining speaks to the Crown’s relation to the gold discoveries. Since the early days of colonisation, it hoped to find reserves of bullion like those in Spanish America. Now that it had, it needed to ensure that these would be reverted into an increase in royal revenue. In other words, it needed innovative forms of overseeing production, trade, transport, and, most importantly, taxation. During the period, at least a dozen different forms of tax collection were introduced, none of them meeting the expectations in Lisbon, or being favoured in any degree by its subjects in Brazil (Russell-Wood, 1987, pp. 218, 227). Not surprisingly, it was the source of many conflicts between the local administration and the landlords in the mining regions as early as in the 1720s. This resulted not only in a chronically

⁵⁴ Territorial disputes against the Spanish Empire were not in play in this region, but in the south, around the region of Colônia do Sacramento (an outpost for smuggling coming from Buenos Aires) and some surrounding Jesuit missions. In the Treaty of Madrid (1750) it was agreed that Portugal would rightly rule the territory they occupied (*uti possidetis*) and recognise Spanish right over Sacramento, giving Brazil almost the exact borders as it currently has (Mauro, 1987, p. 65; Silva, 1987, p. 247).

high level of contraband⁵⁵, but also, eventually, in the first internal revolts to seriously challenge Portuguese rule in Brazil, which will be discussed in the next chapter. Moreover, it also reinforced Portugal's pre-modern colonialism, deepening its dependence on England (Arruda, 1991, pp. 385–8)

The Rise of British Influence in Portugal

The absence of a well-established national bourgeoisie is a trait of Portuguese state-formation. The overseas expeditions and the commercial operations that ensued had the participation of traders and bankers from elsewhere: the Genovese were predominant in the 15th century, and the Dutch in the 16th (Arruda, 1991, p. 376; Disney, 2009b, pp. 87–88). One of the main geopolitical changes involving the Portuguese Empire in late 17th and early 18th century is the construction of a lasting alliance with England, which went from the support of the Bragança dynasty against both Spain and the Dutch after the Restoration in the 1640s to a strong dependence on British capital by the end of the 18th century.

After the Duke of Bragança was crowned King João IV in Lisbon in 1640, he had to secure the existence of Portugal by diplomatic and military means. The latter consisted of fighting a number of frontier skirmishes in the Iberian Peninsula and naval battles against Dutch fleets, which contributed to the economic crisis faced by Portugal in the 17th century. The former involved establishing alliances with other European powers in order to overcome its military and financial difficulties. To this end, Portugal secured an unreliable alliance with the French monarchy, but the most important partner was found in Britain. After a lengthy process, a treaty was signed in 1654⁵⁶, in which England committed itself to the protection of Portugal, which in return would concede a series of commercial benefits for British merchants. The alliance with England against Spain proved decisive for Portugal's continuity, but the terms of the alliance also tied it to the long-term pattern of British development⁵⁷ (Disney, 2009a, pp. 226–227).

⁵⁵ Some estimates point that the ratio between the amount of gold smuggled and legally exported would reach ½ (Arruda, 1991, p. 388).

⁵⁶ A first treaty was signed between João and Charles I in 1642, but as the latter was killed during the British Civil War, João had renegotiate the deal with Cromwell, despite of his support for the royalist cause during that war (Disney, 2009a, p. 226)

⁵⁷ The fact that Portugal entered such deals for diplomatic and military reasons while England saw it

This trade-off of commercial advantages in exchange for geopolitical support caused a deep imbalance in Portuguese trade, as demand for its colonial products was in decline throughout Europe (most other nations had colonies of their own at this point). Between 1675 and 1690, there were political efforts (especially under the direction of the count of Ericeira) towards an industrial reform in Portugal in order to reduce this imbalance, following the one implemented by the French minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert as model (Disney, 2009a, p. 245). These were abandoned, however, not only due to Ericeira's suicide in 1690, but also due to the gold discoveries in Brazil in the same period. They provided a new form of financing this trade deficit, and renewed the Portuguese comfort with the existing commercial pattern, which was reaffirmed in the Methuen treaties of 1703. In the terms presented by Russel-Wood:

“For Portugal, news of the discovery of gold came at a time of severe economic recession and balance of payments problems resulting from the Methuen Treaty (1703) with England. While in the short term Portugal was to be saved economically by imports of gold from Brazil, the long-term benefits to the nation's economy were limited because of the failure to develop any systematic agricultural or industrial policy. The nature of the colonial pact was to be irremediably altered. That the colony had become wealthier than the mother country was self-evident. A universally recognized commodity of exchange – gold – placed Brazil vis à vis Portugal in a position of greater economic autonomy (...). But in the broader perspective the result was to reduce Portugal to the status of an entrepot, on the one hand for imports from England and northern Europe that Brazilians demanded but Portugal herself was unable to supply, and on the other for remittances of Brazilian gold which arrived in the Tagus only to be dispatched to London in payment for these imports.” (Russell-Wood, 1987, pp. 241–242)

The Methuen treaties⁵⁸ secured the Portuguese market for English woollens, and the English one for Portuguese wines. In the long term, it “locked a still largely agrarian Portugal into the economic embrace of an England on the verge of modern industrialisation” (Disney, 2009a, p. 248). The Portuguese dependency on British economy grew in the following decades, financed by Brazilian gold exports, as shown in the table below

mostly as a commercial agreement (Disney, 2009a, p. 243) contributes to the notion of a different form of geopolitics coming into play with the rise of capitalism in England.

⁵⁸ There were two treaties, signed in May and December 1703 (on the aftermath of the Spanish War of Succession), both named after the British ambassador and Member of Parliament and Lord Chancellor of Ireland, John Methuen. The first consolidated a military alliance between Portugal and England, while the second was a trade agreement that lowered tariffs for British woollens and Portuguese wine in their bilateral trade (Disney, 2009a, p. 248). As was seen above, the exchange of a geopolitical alliance for commercial benefits was shaped in the Portuguese restoration, fifty years before. The Methuen treaties do not present an innovation, but consolidation and reaffirmation.

Table 2 – Balance of Trade between Portugal and England: 1701-1750 (average annual value in thousands of £s)

Years	Exports Portugal- England	Imports England-Portugal	Balance
1701-05	242	610	-368
1706-10	240	652	-412
1711-15	252	638	-386
1716-20	349	695	-346
1721-25	387	811	-424
1726-30	359	914	-555
1731-35	326	1,024	-698
1736-40	301	1,164	-863
1741-45	429	1,115	-686
1746-50	324	1,114	-790
Total	3,209	8,737	

(Schumpeter, 1960, pp. 17–18 cited in Mauro, 1987, p. 60)

The exports of Brazilian gold represented, for Portugal, the reaffirmation of its old colonial practices based on taxation and trade monopolies, and condemned it to geopolitical and economic dependency on Britain for decades to come. For England, on the other hand, it fostered the development of a new form of imperialism, based on differential terms of trade between the colony and the mother country, the former exporting raw materials and the latter manufactured and industrialised products (Arruda, 1991, p. 394). In fact, from the Brazilian perspective, the 18th century initiates the shift from the formal domination as a part of Portuguese empire to a sovereign but subaltern position in the British informal empire, to be consolidated in the first quarter of the 19th century, as evidenced by George Canning's claim about the independence of Spanish America (but equally applicable to Brazil) in 1824: "[she] is free, and if we do not mismanage our affairs sadly, she is *English*" (quoted in Gallagher and Robinson, 1953, p. 8). The political situation created by the economic policy of Lisbon in the first half of the 18th century is well depicted in the following passage:

“A prisoner of clauses of the famous Methuen Treaty of 1703, Portugal had gradually relinquished her developing manufactures in favour of a return to viticulture and the export of wine and olive oil. She found herself increasingly dependent on the outside world and, above all, on England, her principal trading partner and major supplier of manufactured goods, and time-honoured guarantor of her political independence. Had they been invested in a more general effort at development, Brazilian gold and diamonds could have stimulated a better exploitation of Portugal's natural resources, agriculture and mining and, even more, the manufactures needed to satisfy the increased demand in Brazil arising from population growth and greater wealth. Instead, they were used for ostentatious expenditure and, above all, as an easy method of financing a steadily worsening deficit in the balance of payments. At the same time, Brazilian gold, clandestine as well as legal, was one of the factors in England's own industrial and commercial growth. Towards the end of Dom Joao V's reign the easy-going climate and false euphoria of a long period of peace was already beginning to evaporate and signs of a crisis were increasingly apparent and during the reign of José I the crisis deepened.” (Silva 1987, p.262)

It becomes clear from the analysis of the economic and foreign policy of the Portuguese Empire in the first half of the 18th century that there is no manifest drive towards development, understood as the transformation of productive forces. The pressures faced by Lisbon in that period were in no way related to economic growth or the balance of trade, but to ensuring the stability of its monarchic dynasty against its European rivals, both in terms of avoiding rival nobility groups in its own line of succession and of defending itself against military aggression. There were economic concerns, of course, as made explicit above by the protectionist policies of the Count of Ericeira, in the 1680-90s. They only become, however, a central part of the Empire's policymaking with the naming of Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, the Marquis of Pombal, as a minister, as will be discussed below.

The Colonial Crisis: Return to Agriculture and the Twilight of Formal Colonialism

The second half of the 18th century is a period of intense transformations in Portugal, in Brazil, and in the way they relate to each other. In the core of this transformation, we find an intense economic crisis that appears as the result of the exhaustion of Brazilian mines, the adoption of protectionist policies in the Portuguese Empire under the command of the Marquis of Pombal and other like-minded ministers after him, as well as a revival of traditional agriculture in the coastal regions supported by favourable geopolitical conditions. As a result, at the dawn of the 19th century Brazil has a moment of unparalleled relevance within the Empire. This is not only evidenced by trade statistics between Portugal, Brazil, and England, but also made clear in the political climate within the Empire, with the first appearances of social

movements fighting (or at least plotting) for Brazilian independence from Portugal and its separation from the Empire. The events of this period are essential to set the tone for the political upheavals in the first half of the 19th century, which will be covered in the next chapter.

Firstly, the 1750s saw a critical increase in public expenditure by the court in Lisbon. A severe earthquake hit the city in 1755, and a frequent border tension with the Spanish colonies regarding the *Colônia do Sacramento* and the *Sete Missões* area led to the militarisation of Southern Brazil, which implied a long term mobilization with high costs for the crown (Disney 2009b, pp.289–293). For the misfortune of the Portuguese court, their main source of revenue - the mines in Minas Gerais, Goiás and Mato Grosso – were in open decline at the beginning of the 1760s, as described by Alden:

“The principal cause of the severe curtailment of the crown’s income from Brazil was the declining yield of the gold and diamond mines of the interior. While the three leading bullion-producing captaincies reached peak levels of production at slightly different times, the maximum yield from the mining sector occurred during the latter half of the 1750s and between 1755-9 and 1775-9 there was a drop in output of 51.5 per cent” (Alden 1987, pp.303–4)

Just as quickly as the discovery of the gold mines in Minas Gerais brought economic stability for the Portuguese Empire for half a century, their downturn was now leaving it in serious financial trouble, as it was an essential tool to finance Portugal’s balance of trade with England (Mauro 1987, pp.59–61). It is in this context that Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, the Marquis of Pombal becomes Dom José I’s Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and War, becoming later the Secretary for Internal Affairs and President of the *Erário Régio* (national treasury), effectively functioning as a Prime Minister between 1750 and 1777. Although he leaves his functions in government due to personal grievances with Dona Maria I (Queen of Portugal from 1777 to 1792) his influence is felt until the end of the century through his like-minded successors (Silva 1987, pp.246–7).

In a revival of mercantilist ideas (focused on a profitable balance of trade through the establishment and exploitation of trade monopolies), Pombaline policies are focused on two main goals: to increase the crown’s revenue by increasing the volume of Portuguese trade, especially with Brazil; and to reduce the deficit in the Empire’s balance of trade, which would encompass the adoption of protectionist tariffs stimulating Portuguese manufactures and thus reduce Portugal’s dependence on England. (Silva 1987, pp.262–3; Disney 2009a, pp.289–292). For Brazil, specifically,

the plan involved a more rigid and centralized administration, which included the transfer of the colonial capital to Rio de Janeiro in 1763 (from where trade could be more effectively controlled) and the attempt to impose a stronger control over Brazilian trade. Two monopolist companies were created (and financed mostly by Portuguese aristocrats) to oversee trade with the regions of Grão-Pará e Maranhão (1755) and Pernambuco e Paraíba (1759), as well as revitalise their agricultural activity. An extension of this system of monopolist trading companies was planned for the captaincies of Bahia and Rio de Janeiro, but it was countered by “strong British opposition”. Instead, in these regions the *frota* (fleet) system was abolished in 1765, liberalising trade rather than strengthening the imperial neo-mercantilist control upon it (Alden 1987, pp.305–7; Disney 2009a, p.286; Disney 2009b, pp.277–280; Bethell 1989, pp.4–5).

In fact, the companies created by Pombal to strengthen Portuguese trade with Brazil were dismantled by his successor in 1778. At that point, Brazilian slave-based agriculture was recovering from its long crisis, once again becoming the main economic activity in the colony. That was not only due to Pombal economic policies and administrative reforms, but also to the favourable geopolitical conditions. The seven-year war (1754-63), deepened Portugal’s geopolitical connection to England, which once again protected Lisbon from a Spanish invasion (Disney 2009a, p.288). The colonial revolutions in the American continent in late 18th century would change this scenario even further:

"In Brazil the development and production of traditional and new staples continued to be encouraged, and the economic policies begun under Pombal benefited from two important geopolitical changes. The first came after 1777 when the North American War of independence forced England to look for new sources of raw materials for her rapidly developing cotton industry, especially cotton itself and dyestuffs, and the second came after 1789, when the French Revolution and Napoleon's rise to power led to revolution in Saint-Domingue (and the destruction of the world's leading sugar industry) and war on the European continent. As a result Portugal found other profitable outlets on the international market for her colonial products like sugar (from Pernambuco, Bahia, and, increasingly, Rio de Janeiro), cotton (from Maranhao, but now also Pernambuco, Bahia and Rio de Janeiro), tobacco, indigo, cochineal and cacao, and, naturally, demand pushed up prices. (...)" (Silva 1987, pp.270–1)

As Portugal was increasingly more dependent on Brazil for economic reasons, Pombaline reforms meant a centralization of political authority in the colony, reaffirming the rule of Lisbon over the whole extension of the territory and the unity of the Empire. This involved a confrontation with groups and individuals who were critical of the crown or of its policies, such as the corporation of Lisbon merchants

which was abolished in 1755; but targeted also institutions which could be seen as real obstacles to the sovereignty of the Empire, such as the Jesuits. The order was described at that time as a “state within a state”, criticised for excessive accumulation and impeding the implementation of the Treaty of Madrid, which invited accusations of treason and betrayal. They were expelled from the Empire in 1759 (Silva 1987, p.255).

The cases that best exemplify the reaction to the crown’s effort of securing the authority of the Portuguese Empire over the entirety of Brazilian territory are the two anticolonial conspiracies that take place in late 18th century, both dominated by landowners of their respective regions, but with a significant variation in the composition of its social support: the *Inconfidência Mineira* (1788-9) and the *Conjuração Baiana* (1798). These were regional conspiracies (being suppressed before escalating into actual rebellions) that sought to break free from Portuguese rule, being very influenced by French philosophy and other rebellions at the time (such as the independence of British American colonies). However, they differed in their social composition and in their proclaimed goals. The first of them was motivated by the colonial secretary’s attempt to keep the taxes over the mining activity as a steady source of income for the crown, despite the exhaustion of the mines. It involved about twenty conspirators, landowners, army officers, and magistrates among them. After being exposed, only six of them were punished: five being sent to Angola and one hanged publicly. The second one, in Bahia, came from a handwritten manifesto urging the “Republican Bahian people” to support an armed uprising against the “detestable metropolitan yoke of Portugal”. The colonial minority, fearing a black/mulatto uprising, quickly found and arrested 49 suspects, including five women and eleven slaves. Of those, 33 were punished, 4 of which hanged (Alden 1987, pp.336–40).

There is a lot to be said regarding similarities and differences between these movements, including their goals, social composition, and the Portuguese reaction to each of them. In the narrative presented here, it suffices to say that they evidence a new form of social conflict. For the first time since the arrival of European settlers, the subjects of the Empire were acting against the Empire itself, instead of acting on its behalf in the occupation of the territory and in keeping the natives and the slaves under control. In a geopolitical context marked by the independence of the United States, the French revolution, and the Haitian revolution, this new focus of social contestation was deeply concerning for the Portuguese crown, for it was not only dependant on its American colony to keep good relations with its British allies, but was growing

increasingly so. It can be said (Bethell 1989, pp.8–9) that this is precisely the moment when a proper “Brazilian identity” emerges among some sectors of the colony’s ruling and middle classes, which begin to oppose their political interests and goals to those of the metropolis. The conflict between these groups and the crown and its supporters will be the leading thread of political events in early 19th century, being present in the independence and throughout the reign of Pedro I.

Conclusion

The colonial period can hardly be assessed as a continuum, due to the intense variations in the relationship between Portugal and its colony in the more than three centuries that stand between the arrival of the Europeans on the continent and Brazilian independence. Throughout these centuries, the link between Brazil and Portugal is always mediated by the geopolitics put in motion by the Empire. These territorial practices resulted from the way in which the class conflict between its own ruling classes (mostly aristocracy and merchants) and the landed oligarchy that was formed in Brazil was converted into imperial policies that reinforced the Empire’s rule, and enabled the practices of reproduction of its elites.

The first contribution achieved in this chapter holds that, precisely due to its contested nature, these geopolitics of the Portuguese Empire cannot be reduced to a generic notion of colonialism that applies uniformly throughout the whole period. The challenges faced by the Portuguese ruling class to remain in control of the Empire are in constant change, therefore, the strategies employed also change constantly, generating a variety of cumulative outcomes. In this sense, it can be said that there is no single logic of imperialism, colonialism, modernity, or any other overall rationale that guides the colonial policy of Portugal in that time. Rather, that policy is constantly shaped according to the challenges and opportunities presented to the Portuguese ruling class in their struggle to maintain their material conditions of existence – which in its particular case is tied to the existence and growth of the Portuguese Empire, and their own rights and privileges within it. Therefore, the ever-shifting colonial policy can only be understood as a product of the class struggle between the Portuguese aristocracy and those opposed to it, both within the Empire and in the wider European context.

There is also a second contribution that this chapter provides to the assessment of the role of Portuguese colonialism in Brazilian history. That is precisely the identification of what constitutes the set of social and geopolitical practices that shape Brazilian society by the end of the colonial period, *i.e.*, the colonial legacy that continues to shape important aspects of Brazilian society a long way after formal independence. It can be referred to as the colonial slave-based set of social property relations that appears in late 16th and is consolidated in the 17th century. Besides the adoption of African slavery as its main form of labour (therefore relying on extra-economic means of coercion and surplus extraction), it also entails a peculiar spatial practice revolving around the necessity of importing slaves and exporting the products of agriculture and extractivism. They also encompass a distinct form of land property that can be traced back to the Portuguese *sesmarias* system, which constitute a fragmented form of political authority that presents an obstacle to the establishment of centralized state sovereignty in the 19th century. These contributions are fundamental, as they set the terms of the rest of this research: they consolidate Political Marxist radical historicism as my method of analysis, and provide me with a historically constituted object – the “colonial legacy” – that highlights and defines the specificities of the Brazilian process of state-formation, allowing me to identify transitions and continuities in its social processes in the centuries that follow the formal independence.

This account also challenges the inherent state-centrism in IR, as it investigates the origins of the divide between the “domestic” and the “international”. Rather than holding this divide as a starting point, this narrative frames its rise in the geopolitical practices of intra-ruling class struggle in the Portuguese Empire. In doing so, it looks at the challenges faced by the Portuguese aristocracy to maintain its rule over the Empire and its practices of reproduction. These could be framed as challenges to its claim to sovereignty over the territory (as the French and British piracy and the Dutch invasion were), or to the existing social property relations in any other way (like the slave resistance in the *quilombos* throughout the 17th century). Therefore, in line with Lacher’s proposal for the discipline of IR (Lacher, 2006, p. 15), this chapter presented the Portuguese colonisation in America as a social process that constitutes a political space, inscribing it in the colony/metropolis relation in the core of the Portuguese

Empire, and later in the fringes of what is described as the British informal empire⁵⁹ (Bethell, 2011; Gallagher and Robinson, 1953).

This chapter also identifies, by the end of the 18th century, a new social actor (or a new group of actors) with an alternative geopolitics – the idea of Brazil as a sovereign state. The rise of a proper “Brazilian” identity, in opposition to the “Portuguese” one is what fuels the social and political conflict that ultimately leads to the Brazilian independence in 1822. To understand that event and the political upheavals that follow it in the second quarter of the 19th century, it is necessary to consider the processes outlined here – the history of Portuguese colonialism in America. It is only in that history that can be found the roots of the Brazilian state and society. Without it, their existence must somehow be taken for granted.

⁵⁹ The notion of informal empire used by Gallagher and Robinson is not in perfect accordance to the theoretical formulations of Political Marxism, as it considers imperialism “as a sufficient political function of (...) integrating new regions into the expanding economy”, and leaves unclear how “although imperialism is a function of economic expansion, it is not a necessary function” (Gallagher and Robinson, 1953, pp. 5–6). Political Marxism fills that gap by portraying each particular form of imperialism as an outcome of contested social relations. Therefore, even if Gallagher and Robinson miss the social processes which inform the particular mode of foreign policy formation that results in the form of imperialism they analyse (*i.e.* British informal imperialism), and see it as a trait of late-Victorian period in response to a particular historiographical debate, the historical reconstruction carried out in this chapter under the rigour of PM’s method permits the characterisation of the relationship between England and the Portuguese Empire in the 18th century (and later with Brazil in the first half of the 19th century) as an early form of that described by them in late 19th century.

Chapter 4 – Social and Geopolitical Roots of Brazil: Formal Independence and Territorial Sovereignty (1808-40)

Introduction

After roughly three hundred years of Portuguese colonialism, formal Brazilian sovereignty gradually materialised during the first quarter of the 19th century. It was eventually formally codified in the early months of 1823. This chapter reconstructs the historical narrative of that process, which culminates in the turbulent reign of Pedro I and, after his abdication from the Brazilian throne and return to Portugal in 1831, in an even more troubled period known as the Regency (1831-41). This chapter investigates the literature on Brazilian history to identify the social and geopolitical practices on both sides of the Atlantic that shaped the specificity of the decolonisation process and the making of Brazil as a modern sovereign state. Yet, even though sovereignty was formally achieved in 1823, this chapter seeks to demonstrate how this transition went hand in hand with the persistence of colonial practices both domestically and internationally. The main tasks of this chapter are: to track the multiple agents in the construction of formal independence, to assess the extent to which the advent of sovereign statehood was a rupture with Brazil's colonial past, and to identify the colonial practices that survive this change and their precise ways in which they shaped the historical particularity of Brazil throughout the 19th century.

My argument is fourfold. Firstly, I argue that the making of Brazilian sovereign statehood must be understood by inscribing the geopolitical agents involved in that process in their historical context and by tracking their interaction with each other. Secondly, although territorial sovereignty was established in 1823, there is a distinction between this formal independence and the constitution of the Brazilian state. As the political institutions of the First Empire were a continuation of those from the colonial period, and Pedro I insisted in securing his place as an absolutist ruler, the institutional transformations associated to the idea of “modern state-formation”⁶⁰ only took place after his abdication. Thirdly, I argue that this distinction (between formal

⁶⁰ The idea appears in currents of neo-Weberian historical sociology as the rationalisation of the means of coercion and warfare (Skocpol, 1979; Tilly, 1992). From an English School perspective, it describes the process through which a state adheres to the cultural values of European modernity, such as sovereignty, democracy, international law and the protection of individual rights (Bull, 1977; Bull and Watson, 1984; Gong, 1984; Schulz, 2014).

independence and modern state formation) was a result of the unchanged pre-capitalist social property relations that shaped the trajectory of the Brazilian political institutions. During the First Empire, the disputes around the state (its structure, constitution, institutions, and legitimating discourses) involved essentially the same actors as they did under the final years of the colonial period: a Portuguese aristocracy and the merchants that relied on their politically constituted trade monopolies; against a domestic class alliance between the many local Brazilian elites of landowning oligarchies relying on slave labour for surplus extraction. Fourthly, I highlight the role of Britain (that is, of British diplomacy driven mostly by the gains of British merchants and by the interests of the social classes represented in their Parliament) throughout the period as an important actor in that dispute between the Portuguese aristocracy and landowners in Brazil, as it inserts that new sovereign entity in a new relation of dependency which involves, for instance, opposing the attempts of reinstating a Portuguese monopoly over Brazilian trade.

This chapter's main argument, therefore, is an inversion of Gramsci's (1971, p. 276) classic formulation: "(...) the old is dying and the new cannot be born". In this case, the new – a sovereign state in Portuguese America – is born, but the old – the form of social reproduction and class relations created in the colonial period – refuses to die. The (new) territorial sovereign entity is created, but it exists under the same (old) social property relations, which severely obstructs the "newness" of political institutions. A significant change in political institutions is necessarily predicated on a similar transformation in social property relations. In this sense, my argument rejects interpretations that overemphasise either the radical rupture of the "new" or the trans-historical logics of the "old".

The interlocutors I engage with in this chapter have in common their reliance on those structural accounts in some way. Firstly, the English School literature have put an exaggerated emphasis on the "new" modern state, as a progressive step in the linear evolution of a society within an anarchical world and towards a given set of common values. This leaves limits their account of the role played by colonialism in international relations or of the social origins of statehood itself. Secondly, Decolonial Theory scholars focus on the "old" – the "coloniality" of the modern world-system that exists since 1492 – missing the differences between the many forms of class relations that the constitutive units of that system (be them states, or classes) maintain between (and within) themselves. In other words, their explanation for the continuity

of “colonialism” into the systemic “coloniality of power” is not sufficiently grounded in historically specific social relations. At last, the Marxist traditions of UCD and Neogramscianism rely on the trans-historical teleology that posits the Brazilian case as an “amalgamation” or a “transitional form”, to which the transition to capitalism will arrive through “passive revolution” or a “catch-up” derived from an ontological societal multiplicity.

Instead, this historical narrative is informed by a Political Marxist theoretical framework which is centred on class agency and radical historicism. It develops a way of conceptualising geopolitical agency in order to be able to identify change within continuities (Wood, 1995). It therefore refuses to take any social development as a part of some predetermined path or a manifestation of some overarching logic. Instead it privileges the co-constructive relation between social and geopolitical struggles, and the open-ended character of both. Consequently, it stresses the need to understand historical developments (*e.g.*, the creation of a sovereign state in 1822-3, or its direct control by the *latifundista* class in the early 1830s) primarily as the outcome of contested attempts to reproduce or transform social property relations. Large-scale political change will be understood through the relations between the ruling classes of the Luso-Brazilian Empire, the relations between these elites and the labouring classes from who they obtain a surplus, and both of those in the wider context of European geopolitical disputes.

The historical account will be divided in four distinct moments. It begins with the migration of the royal family and the Portuguese court to Rio de Janeiro in 1808, which introduces significant changes in the intra-imperial relations between Brazil and Portugal. Starting from an overview of the social and geopolitical context in which it took place, I proceed to an investigation of the rationale of this migration and its (unintended) consequences for Brazilian politics in the coming decades. Secondly, it details the Portuguese attempts to recolonize Brazil after the liberal revolutions in Porto and Lisbon which prompted Dom João VI, then king of Portugal, to return to Lisbon, leaving his son, Pedro, behind. This reveals how the aristocracy (in particular, the royal family) responded to the social pressures coming from both sides of the Atlantic, and evidences the dispute between different the coexisting geopolitical practices of the actors involved. When Pedro is finally given an ultimatum by the court in Lisbon to return to Portugal and refuses to do so, he proclaims the independence of Brazil. The chapter then proceeds to a third moment, marked by an intense conflict in

the Brazilian elite about the constitution of the state, a domestic conflict that now becomes re-situated in a wider geopolitical context through the even stronger influence of Great Britain in Brazil, expressed, for instance, in its role in negotiation the recognition of Brazil by Portugal under the pressures of the Holy Alliance in Europe, and the U.S. Monroe Doctrine. When the political crisis towards the end of Pedro I's reign – known as the First Empire – culminates in his abdication and return to Portugal, Brazil is ruled by a Regency for a decade before the coming of age of the new emperor, Pedro II. The Regency period will then be examined by this chapter as the fourth and last part of its historical account, as the first time in which the Brazilian ruling classes were directly engaged in controlling the state. The intra-elite disputes during the First Empire and the Regency changed the terms in which social and geopolitical struggles were framed. As a result, the changes introduced in 1822-3 are consolidated. However, pre-colonial practices and institutions – such as slavery and its international trade, the mediation between Brazilian agricultural production and its market by European traders, and the form of politically constituted property based on royal concessions – survived these changes and were still being reproduced under formal independence, coexisting with its new structures and influencing its development.

Before I proceed to the historical analysis of the events that culminated with Brazilian sovereignty, I will provide a short summary of the conclusions of the previous chapter. After a careful evaluation of Portuguese colonialism in America in the three centuries that precede the object of the present chapter, its outcomes in Brazil can be summarized in the peculiar set of social property relations it brought into existence. It revolved around a particular form of politically constituted land property based on the medieval institute of the *sesmaria*, and the fragmented political authority of the hereditary captaincies – the most important part of the ruling classes, the landlords and slave-owners⁶¹. It also includes the adoption of African slavery as the most common form of labour, mostly in agriculture and mining. Additionally, it is essential to highlight Brazil's geopolitical context, in which the necessities of the ruling classes to import African slaves and to assure the access of their export commodities (mostly sugar, cotton and gold, with coffee under constant growth) to the

⁶¹ Although it was not rare for a free citizen (including from African origin and former slaves) in 19th-century Brazil to own slaves, I use the term “slaveowners” for those who have access to them in large numbers, being able to mobilise an enormous (fifty or more) army of workers. Data confirms that these large-scale slave-owners are part of the landowning *latifundiário* oligarchy, and most slaves in Brazil were under their control (Klein and Luna, 2010, p. 89; Reis, 1986, p. 25)

European markets were mediated by the monopoly of Portuguese merchants. In Portugal, on the other hand, the population was composed by a vast majority of peasants and an imperial bureaucracy formed by aristocrats, whose biggest revenues came from Brazilian trade – be it from its taxation or from its politically enforced commercial monopolies.

An Empire on the Run

At the dawn of the 19th century, the European continent was ravaged by the wars of Napoleonic France. After the Thermidor, the rise of Napoleon mobilized the revolutionary forces in France towards a long campaign of military imperial expansionism, which put it in direct conflict not only against Austria and Russia as the bastions of European absolutism, but also against the main economic and naval power of the period: Britain. Since its own revolution in 1688 and rapid industrialization Britain maintained a policy of external balancing in Europe, which consisted in preventing the rise of any hegemonic pan-European territorial empire (Teschke, 2009). Therefore, the fundamental conflict of early 19th-century European geopolitics was one between France and Britain (Hobsbawm, 1996, pp. 24–5). In the first decade of the 19th century, the conflict had already reached a standoff: France did not have the naval capabilities to defeat the English fleets, and Britain depended on the other territorial powers to stop Napoleon's army. In 1806, Napoleon's strategy against Britain was a "continental blockade": France used its military resources to create a "captive market" for itself, forbidding all of continental Europe to trade with Britain and threatening with invasion those who refused to comply. It is this wider European conflict that sets the context for the transfer of the Portuguese court and imperial capital from Lisbon to Rio de Janeiro in 1808, configuring but not determining the following events that culminated in the Brazilian independence from Portugal.

Throughout the 18th century, the stability of the Portuguese Empire grew increasingly dependent on two strategic relationships. On one hand, there was the British state, who was the guarantor of Portuguese military security against its Spanish neighbours; and on the other, Brazil, from where a commercial surplus would continually finance the trade with Britain in that period. This happened initially in the form of gold, and later, when the British start facing problems with their own American colonies, in agricultural goods, mostly sugar and cotton, with coffee already appearing

among the most important exports. (Alden, 1987, pp. 310, 330; Silva, 1987, pp. 262, 270–1). In fact, between 1789 and 1806, Brazilian exports to Portugal nearly quadrupled, which contributed to a shift in the balance of trade with Britain in Portugal's favour (Alden, 1987, p. 334; Silva, 1987, pp. 277–9).

“It should be remembered that the economic gains registered during this period were achieved using backward forms and techniques. Despite the elimination of the Jesuits and the harassment of other land-owning religious orders, no fundamental changes occurred in land tenure. The rise of cotton, the expansion of sugar, and the growth of livestock ranching, particularly in Rio Grande do Sul, merely accentuated existing patterns of latifundia. And the backbone of the plantation and ranch labour force remained, as it had been since the 16th century, black slaves. If the figures presented (...) are reasonably accurate, it appears that slave imports increased by 66 per cent between 1780–5 and 1801–5, a direct consequence of the agrarian revival.” (Alden, 1987, pp. 329–331).

Brazil's weight in the strategic balance of the Empire (and therefore, of the rule by the Portuguese aristocracy) was increasing rapidly at the turn of the century. This is evidenced, for instance, by the increase in the Brazilian population (estimated between 2.5 and 4 times throughout the 18th century, totalling between 2 and 3 million by 1800, and between 4 and 5 million by 1822) which was approaching and would soon surpass Portugal's (which in 1800 stood between 3 and 3.5 million). It is impossible to say how much of this growth was natural and how much was due to migration. However, one factor that contributed significantly to this rise was the slave trade⁶², which from the 1750s onwards brought over 150,000 slaves to Brazil, mostly from the Angolan coast⁶³. In some personal writings from 1810, Lord Strangford estimates the ethnic composition of the Brazilian population in the main captaincies, with the proportion of slaves ranging from 16% (in São Paulo) to over 45% (in Rio de Janeiro, Maranhão, Goiás, and Bahia). Estimates reveal that the average of slaves brought into Brazil per decade between 1750 and 1800 range between 25 and 30 thousand. In that same period Rio de Janeiro replaces Salvador as the main port of entry for slaves, concentrating over 50% of the slave trade. Both these numbers (the absolute number of slaves

⁶² Since the 17th century the slave trade no longer operated under the *asiento* contracts: it was monopolised by the Brazil Company (*Companhia Geral do Comércio do Brasil*) in 1649, which in 1662 was nationalised under the authority of the Trade Board (*Junta do Comércio*) of the Portuguese Empire, which was responsible for enforcing the monopoly and overseeing trade (more strictly after Pombal and his reforms in the 1750s), even after it was moved to Rio in early 19th century. However, as the demand for slave labour was constantly higher in Brazil than in Spanish America, it was difficult for the Portuguese Empire to maintain control over this trade throughout the whole period. For instance, British ships were known to be essential for the operation of the Brazil Company in its early days (Blackburn, 2010, p. 207; Disney, 2009a, p. 244; McAlister, 1984, p. 386).

⁶³ There were in fact regional preferences. While the slaves arriving in Rio de Janeiro were mostly from Angola, the landowners in Maranhão and Pará preferred Guinean slaves, and in Bahia, from the Dahomey coast (Alden, 1987, pp. 292–3).

brought to Brazil and their concentration in Rio) would increase in the first quarter of the 19th century with the rise of coffee plantations in the Paraíba Valley, and the British pressures towards the abolition of slave trade (Alden, 1987, pp. 290–4; Bethell and De Carvalho, 1989, pp. 45–6, 94–5).

This continuous growth of the slave trade and, consequentially, the expansion of slave-based plantation economy throughout the 50 years that precede the Brazilian formal independence from Portugal presents three significant outcomes for the social and geopolitical order that constituted Brazil at the time. Firstly, the constant purchase of slaves, by constituting an advancement in future surplus from the slave/landowners to slave traders (Gorender, 1978, pp. 186–190; Marx, 1999b, p. 565) represents also a steady transfer of surplus from the colonial production of commodities to the European commercial capital in the slave trade between Africa and the Americas⁶⁴. Secondly, the price of a slave during this period ranged between 20% and 25% of their estimated production during their lifetime. This means that the advance in future surplus represented by the purchase of the slave was not high enough to make accumulation by the landowners impossible in Brazil (although an estimate for this rate of accumulation would depend on the time the slaves had available to work for their own subsistence in each case), rather, it means that the surplus was divided between the slave trader and the planter in some proportion. Thirdly, this ascending turn of slave labour had an impact on the non-slave workers, who would concentrate on subsistence farming in small plots of land or tenant farming in *latifúndios*. The growth of plantations means these workers were either being violently separated from their lands (to open space for export crops), or having to contribute with a larger share of their production to the maintenance of the slaves (through their ties with the landlords), resulting in a general increase in food prices⁶⁵ (Gorender, 1978, pp. 208–213).

⁶⁴ Such a transfer of surplus is a common idea to dependency theorists and is commonly explained in a variety of ways, such as the geopolitical connection between “core” and “periphery” societies (Gunder Frank, 1969a) and differential rates of labour exploitation (Marini, 1991). However, Gorender’s work is able to trace it to the particular relation between the slave trade and the “sphere” of colonial production. In other words, that transfer is then inscribed into the very social relations that constitute the reproduction of both landowners and merchants.

⁶⁵ For a detailed account of how the plantations of export crops related to the subsistence economy of both slaves and free workers during the colonial period and the 19th century, see Gorender (1978, pp. 241–267). From the 1830s onwards, it is possible to see the reverse movement taking place in the North-eastern regions due to the crisis in the plantations of sugar and cotton: a decrease in the size of plantations and number of slaves, slaves are allowed more time for their subsistence farming, there is less pressure on free workers, a decrease in food prices. This helps to explain why, even despite the shift of Brazil’s economic and administrative activities to the Southeast, the population of cities like Recife and Salvador grew modestly (rather than decreased) during the first half of the 19th century (Viotti da

The possibility of losing control over Brazilian territory, instigated both by the revolutions in the United States (1776) and Haiti (1791) and by the conspiracies in Minas Gerais and Bahia, was a major concern for the Portuguese aristocracy. Despite the severe repression of these conspiracies, a deep resentment against Portugal's policies for Brazil was common among the plantation landlords and slave-owners that composed the bulk of Brazilian elites, especially because of their subjection to the Empire's taxes and the (politically enforced) monopoly of Brazilian trade by Portuguese traders (Bethell, 1989, p. 12). These concerns fuelled the need for liberal reform in the heart of the Empire, shown in the policies adopted by Dom Rodrigo de Souza Coutinho, the Count of Linhares, after his appointment as secretary of state for naval and colonial affairs⁶⁶ in 1796. He pointed out not only the need of "enlightened government and political and economic reform to secure the continued loyalty of the Brazilian oligarchy", but also the necessity of adopting a neutral stance in European affairs. From 1801 onwards, Linhares feared the possibility of a French invasion in Portugal, which would increase the possibilities of losing Brazil either through an internal revolution in Brazil, or through its capture by a colonial rival. Before resigning in 1803, he recommended that, as a last resort, the Prince Regent Dom João should abandon Portugal, move to Brazil, and establish 'a great and powerful empire' in America⁶⁷ (Bethell, 1989, p. 13; Da Cunha, 1997, pp. 136–140; Silva, 1987, pp. 282–3).

The idea faced a lot of opposition from the merchants in Lisbon, but was favoured by the British government for a variety of reasons. Not only would the Portuguese court and fleet stay away from French control, but Brazil would be still available as a destination for its goods, which were facing strong obstacles in Europe (because of the blockade imposed by Napoleon). In fact, in August 1807 George Canning – the British Foreign Secretary – issued military threats to Portugal in case

Costa, 2000).

⁶⁶ In the first half of the 18th century, under the reign of João V, the Portuguese Empire goes through an institutional reform in which the councils of nobles are gradually marginalised and replaced by a few office-holders chosen by the King to act as his councillors: the secretaries of state. From 1736 onwards, there were three of them: one for foreign affairs and war, one naval and colonial affairs, and one for internal affairs. These appointed bureaucrats were not necessarily from the high nobility, and did not have executive powers per se, but they did control matters under their portfolio and responded only to the King. It is under this quasi-ministerial system that Pombal effectively rules Portugal (much like a Prime Minister would) from 1750 to 1777 (Disney, 2009a, pp. 264–5).

⁶⁷ The first mentions of such a move of the Empire's core to Brazil date back to 1738, when the diplomat Dom Luís da Cunha argued that Rio de Janeiro was in a better position than Lisbon to be the capital of a "great maritime and commercial empire" (Bethell, 1989, p. 14; Silva, 1987, p. 282).

they complied with the demands made by France, much like Napoleon had done shortly before. Britain, however, had been the external guarantor of the Braganzas in Portugal for a long time⁶⁸, and Canning added the proposal of protecting the Prince Regent's withdrawal to Brazil⁶⁹. The last months of 1807 were a period of high drama for the Portuguese court. In November, French troops under the command of General Junot started marching towards Lisbon, while a British fleet arrived at the Tagus. On 24 November D. João realised that he would lose Portugal to the French army and decided to leave the kingdom, transferring the court to Brazil. Between 25 and 27 November, the ruling aristocracy of the Portuguese Empire (10-15 thousand people) embarked on a fleet composed by almost 50 Portuguese ships, accompanied by British escorts. They left towards the Atlantic on 29 November, one day before Junot's troops arrived in Lisbon (Bethell, 1989, pp. 15–6).

The historical significance of these events can hardly be overestimated. This was the first and only time in history that the head of an European empire emigrated to the Americas, transferring the seat of government of the metropolis to the colony. The entire court and all government institutions were transferred to Brazil. One of its lasting consequences for the next decades was that British informal empire – the use of diplomacy (negotiating unequal treaties and trade agreements) rather than direct political domination to secure the pre-eminence of British traders (Gallagher and Robinson, 1953) – was now directly present in Brazil, as the seat of the Portuguese Empire, demanding compensation for the protection of the court. The British diplomat in the Portuguese court at that time, Lord Strangford, wrote about his role in this episode: “I have entitled England to establish with the Brazils the relation of sovereign and subject, and to require obedience to be paid as the prices of protection” (Bethell, 1989, p. 16).

The arrival of the Portuguese court in 1808 effectively marks the end of Brazil as a colony, at least according to the way the notion of “colony” was constructed in the relation between Portugal and Brazil until the 18th century⁷⁰. However, rather than

⁶⁸ The alliance through which Britain grants Portugal military protection against its enemies dates back to the Restoration of the latter's independence from Habsburg Spain in the 1640s, and especially after the treaty signed with Cromwell in 1654 that established beneficial conditions for British traders in Portugal, in return for the much needed military support (Disney, 2009a, p. 244).

⁶⁹ This was settled in the signing of a secret convention in London, in 1807.

⁷⁰ As discussed in Chapter 3

representing a moment of radical rupture with the colonial past⁷¹, existing power and property relations were hardly altered by the events in 1807-8. Although the migration of the whole administrative apparatus of the Empire to Rio de Janeiro was a significant event, it was not a radical transition that severed colonial ties completely. Rather, it is only by keeping account of the connection between the social property relations of colonial slavery, intra-imperial ruling class conflict and the wider geopolitical disputes in Europe that the precise extent of this transformation becomes clear. In that regard, the words of Lord Strangford drove the message home: Brazil was free from Portuguese mercantilism to become, in the words of the Swedish minister in Rio at the time, “a colony of Great Britain”⁷² (Burns, 1980, p. 146).

Even before arriving in Rio, Dom João was then forced to open Brazil’s ports to foreign trade, ending the three centuries of monopoly enjoyed by Portuguese merchants⁷³. As Canning planned, Brazil became “an emporium for British manufactures destined for the consumption of the whole of South America”. In Bahia alone, exports would increase 50% in the three following years. In Rio, the number of foreign ships in the port would rise from 90 in 1808 to 122 in 1810, 217 in 1815, and 354 in 1820. Brazilian exports (mostly sugar, cotton and coffee) continued to increase in 1808, enjoying a steady increase in prices throughout the Napoleonic wars. The opening of ports was therefore a very beneficial measure for Brazilian exports, adding the Brazilian landowners’ immediate support to the court in Rio. (Bethell, 1989, pp. 18–9; Burns, 1980, pp. 145–7; Da Cunha, 1997, pp. 141–2).

Lord Strangford, however, still serving as the main British representative in the Portuguese court, pushed for more privileges for his nation’s merchants. Indeed, as the British navy was still needed to defend the Brazilian coast and to eventually free Portugal from the French, Dom João signed in February 1810 the treaties of Navigation and Commerce, and Alliance and Friendship⁷⁴. After those, the tariff for British

⁷¹ Which is the argument of the main authors of the English School (Bull and Watson, 1984; Gong, 1984).

⁷² Both this statement and Lord Strangford’s above support the usefulness of the notion of informal imperialism to describe Britain’s relation with Brazil in that period (Gallagher and Robinson, 1953).

⁷³ More than simply capitulating to British pressure, this was actually presented to D. João as a necessity, as most of the Portuguese merchant fleet was held captive in Lisbon under French occupation. A few months later, he limited foreign commercial activity to five ports (Belém, São Luís, Recife, Bahia and Rio de Janeiro), which attended to a minority of Portuguese interests in Rio, but also facilitated the taxation of those ships (Bethell, 1989, p. 18; Da Cunha, 1997, p. 142).

⁷⁴ British merchants were given the right to establish residence and fully engage in trade activities in Brazil, and the British government could appoint special magistrates to deal with cases involving British subjects in Brazil, openly limiting Brazilian jurisdiction. (Bethell, 1989, p. 20).

manufactured goods was lower even than that for Portuguese ones⁷⁵. Although the ban on manufactures in Brazilian territory had been lifted by Dom João upon his arrival in 1808, such a tariff policy undermined any sort of endogenous industrial development⁷⁶. By 1810, the only sector of Brazilian trade still controlled by Portuguese merchants was that of slaves from Portuguese Africa, which was still increasing steadily for the next decade (Bethell, 1989, pp. 19–20; Da Cunha, 1997, pp. 145–7).

The establishment of the imperial court in Rio had a whole range of different effects in Brazilian social life and in its political administration. For instance, the population of Rio would double in ten years from 1808. The creation of new *comarcas* (municipalities) and the distribution of nobility titles for the Brazilian elite dramatically increased public spending, generating a heavier fiscal burden. Some animosity between the Brazilian upper classes and the Portuguese Court was already present, as the former resented paying taxes to finance the latter's aristocracy. However, initially, Dom João's enlightened absolutism was acceptable for the Brazilian elite, enjoying economic growth (both the local elite and the recently migrated court shared an interest in João's open trade policy) and, in comparison to the rest of the continent, political stability⁷⁷ (Bethell, 1989, pp. 22–3; Paquette, 2013, pp. 96–8). Moving the court to Brazil had long lasting implications in the role played by British informal imperialism in that relationship. The latent social conflict between the Brazilian land- and slaveowners and Portugal was still pending on what would happen once Portugal was freed and the court could return.

From a Transatlantic Portuguese Empire to a Brazilian Sovereign Monarchy

⁷⁵ The tariff for British goods was set at 15%, while the Portuguese were taxed at 16%, which was reduced to 15% only in October. It is important to mention that this low tariff policy was not reciprocal, and, except for cotton, Brazilian goods had to pay very high tariffs in the British market (Bethell, 1989, pp. 19–20; Da Cunha, 1997, p. 146).

⁷⁶ While these politically constituted unequal terms of trade prevented the industrialization of Brazil in early 19th century, they do not allow us to explain the interactions between Brazil and Britain in their entirety purely in terms of a “core-periphery” relation (Wallerstein, 2004, pp. 28–9). Instead, I claim that this geopolitical relation can only be fully understood in its social roots, that is, as an outcome and an expression of class struggles.

⁷⁷ Since the Spanish monarchy was overthrown by Napoleon in 1808, the rest of Latin America faced a series of civil wars and revolutions to establish their independence from Spain.

After the defeat of Napoleon's revolutionary armies in Europe, the victorious powers (Britain, Austria, Prussia and Russia) re-established order among themselves through a series of treaties and congresses generally referred to as the "Concert of Europe". The peace arrangements began with a series of territorial settlements after the Russian victory over Napoleon in 1812, but the Concert only gained its final contours at the Congress of Vienna. In 1815 this intense diplomatic process of reconstruction of post-revolutionary European international relations generated two competing alliances: the Quadruple Alliance (formed by the four victorious in 1815), and the Holy Alliance (composed by the Eastern absolutist powers). The former had the explicit goal of defending Europe against French territorial domination and, after 1815, preventing the rise of such military threats (*i.e.*, imperialist territorial expansionism). In other words, the Quadruple Alliance had in view the maintenance of the European balance of power, and, in line with British foreign policy at the time, the prevention of another territorial empire that could unify the continent (Chapman, 2012, pp. 60–2).

On the other hand, the Holy Alliance was conceived by the Russian Tzar Alexander I with the objective of protecting the old regimes in Europe against the threat of Jacobinism. Upholding "Christian values" and seeing themselves as "members of one and the same Christian nation", the three absolutist monarchies in Europe used the congresses as a form of sustaining their sovereignty based on the divine right of kings, rather than on modern notions of national sovereignty. It is through their efforts that the order created in Vienna becomes a reactionary one. In this context, just like the Bourbon dynasty is reinstated in France by the victorious allies, the Portuguese aristocracy on both sides of the Atlantic expected the king to return to Lisbon after the end of foreign occupation by French (and later, British) forces (Chapman, 2012, pp. 60–2; Hobsbawm, 1996, p. 102; 230; Reus-Smit, 1999, pp. 127–140; Watson, 1992, pp. 238–244).

This created a new geopolitical conjuncture for the Brazilian local elites. Despite the initial benefits reaped from the Court's presence in Rio, it still feared that a return of the former to Portugal would mean a return to the previous patterns of colonial rule. For this reason, the King's decision to stay in Rio in 1815 elevating Brazil to the status of kingdom and placing it alongside Portugal in the hierarchy of the Empire is extremely significant. If it can be said that Brazil was not a colony *de facto* since 1808 with the disruption of the Portuguese commercial monopoly, now it

was formally not a colony. Yet, its formal parity with Portugal within the Braganza Empire (and the later independence from it) marked a deep continuity in the politics of pre-capitalist social property relations that were reproduced and deepened through its reliance on trade with Brazil's new informal imperial master: Britain.

Once again, the increased expenses of the court were a major source of discontent among the elites of the Empire. If those in Brazil were unhappy with the tax rises caused by their military campaigns in Guiana and in the La Plata region, the Portuguese elites, were charged “extraordinary taxes” that were introduced by the French occupation, and kept by the Council of Regency, presided by the Commander in Chief of the Portuguese Army – the British Marshal William Beresford. In fact, members of the Council were linked to the Portuguese agrarian nobility and clergy, which opposed (and openly disobeyed) Dom João's policies for the modernisation of Portugal, which included the abolishment of feudal contributions and the creation of more regular taxes as well as sales of crown and church properties in Portugal. As most of the Portuguese elite based its privileges on Portugal's monopoly of the Brazilian trade, they desired to overturn the changes introduced by the royal decrees of 1815 and 1808, as well as the treaties signed with England in 1810, effectively recolonizing Brazil (Bethell, 1989, pp. 25–6; Da Cunha, 1997, pp. 154–5; Dias, 1975, pp. 94–5).

This Portuguese elite framed its claims in the liberal discourse of that period – that is, one that establishes a frontal attack against absolute monarchy in a call for “constitutional parliamentary government, and the rule of law” (Wood, 2012b, p. 258)⁷⁸. In 1820, a liberal revolution took place in Porto and Lisbon carried out by the military and the bourgeoisie, who were deeply dissatisfied with the economic conditions that resulted from both Portugal's occupation and Imperial policies. It demanded the formulation of a constitution and summoned the *Côrtes Gerais Extraordinárias e Constituintes*, with representatives to be elected in the entire Portuguese world (Brazil had a little less than 40% of the seats).

In fact, these rebellions in Portugal, but especially those in Spain and in Naples in the same year, motivated the European powers to call the congress of Troppau (1820) to discuss how the Quadruple and Holy Alliances would react to them. The difference between the two alliances was strong and mostly due to the involvement of Britain in the first one. As Castlereagh made clear in a State Paper, the Quadruple

⁷⁸ It should be kept in mind that “liberalism” is only used in this narrative in this very limited meaning.

Alliance was “never intended as a Union for the government of the world, or for the superintendence of the internal affairs of other states”. The Holy Alliance (Russia, Prussia and Austria), on the other hand, released the Troppau Protocol, which affirmed their own right to intervene in other states in order to protect the Christian order of absolute monarchies. The only intervention resulting from that protocol took place in Naples, as a result of intense Austrian pressure. An agreement could not be reached on the Spanish case, and Portugal was simply seen by the Holy Alliance as “off limits”, falling under the British sphere of influence (who, at that time, still controlled the access to Lisbon by sea) (Chapman, 2012, pp. 67–70).

In order to properly understand the Portuguese uprisings of 1820 it is important to quickly refer to the discussion around the notion of “bourgeois revolution” within Marxist academic circles. These events in Porto and Lisbon can only be called bourgeois revolutions in a historically specific and agent-centred understanding of the term. That is, only if bourgeois revolutions are those made by a bourgeois class⁷⁹ (Brenner, 2003; Comninel, 1987; Teschke, 2005; Wood, 1996). The adoption of a consequentialist approach, *i.e.*, one in which the label “bourgeois” is stretched to include any political transformation or change in state power that facilitates the promotion of capitalism (Anievas and Nisancioglu, 2015; Callinicos, 1989; Davidson, 2012) does, in fact, misinterpret the historical specificity of the Portuguese case. Because here, the anti-absolutism of Portuguese liberals was wedded to a reaffirmation of the recolonization of Brazil and of the pre-capitalist forms of production and trade that constituted it. This reveals the contradictions that arise from the overextension of concepts beyond the limits of their historical specificity in order to inflate its explanatory potential in ideal-typical ways.

This liberal movement that established the *Côrtes* also urged D. João to return to Lisbon, and established regional *Juntas* in order to oversee the local election of representatives in the *Côrtes*. These *Juntas* were established in the main regions of Brazil, mostly by officers of the Portuguese army and as manifestations of support to

⁷⁹ Of course, since the Portuguese bourgeoisie in the case was a strong supporter of re-establishing the colonial monopoly of trade with Brazil (reinforcing its forms of geopolitical accumulation), it is also necessary to dissociate the idea of “bourgeois revolution” from a transformation towards capitalist social relations. The assumptions that portray capitalism as a historical “burden” or “task” of the bourgeoisie, and the notion that the latter is a transhistorical agent for the promotion of the former are misleading, especially when confronted with the particularities of any given process of transition. In short, “You can have a non-capitalist bourgeoisie, as you can have a capitalist aristocracy.” (Teschke, 2005, p. 11)

the movements in Lisbon and Porto. Brazilian representation in the *Côrtes* was by no means uniform, just as the ruling class in Brazil was diverse in its relationship with the court (Bethell, 1989, pp. 28–30).

The elections for the *Côrtes* drew a distinction between a “Portuguese faction” that favoured the king’s return to Portugal and the recolonization of Brazil (mostly formed by bureaucrats, merchants and army officers), and a “Brazilian faction” (which included some Portuguese-born with family ties in Brazil, or benefiting from free trade) constituted mostly by big landowners and Brazilian-born bureaucrats, which opposed it⁸⁰. There was a deep split in the intra-imperial ruling class. It is important to highlight, however, that the latter was not revolutionary or anti-colonial in any way. They saw the constitution as a possibility of increasing their own power in relation to the king, but they were ultimately interested in protecting the current state of affairs: the political equality with Portugal, their proximity to the court in Rio, and the economic freedom given by the royal decree of 1808 and the treaties with Britain of 1810. There was a minority of more radical revolutionaries, though, including some of the participants of the 1817 rebellion in Pernambuco⁸¹ (Bethell, 1989, pp. 26–7; Da Cunha, 1997, pp. 174–8). In other words:

“The Brazilian dominant class was for the most part conservative, or at most liberal-conservative. It wished to maintain colonial economic and social structures based on the plantation system, slavery and exports of tropical agricultural produce to the European market. But there were liberals, and some authentic revolutionaries in the city of Rio de Janeiro and in São Paulo as well as in Salvador and Recife, most of them in the professions – especially lawyers and journalists – or artisans – tailors, barbers, mechanics – but also small retailers, soldiers and priests. Most were white, but many were mulatto and free black. They looked for profound changes in politics and society: popular sovereignty, democracy, even a republic; social and racial equality, even land reform and the abolition of slavery.” (Bethell, 1989, p. 27).

The composition of social forces in his Atlantic empire placed Dom João in a delicate situation. If he chose to stay in Brazil, he faced the risk of losing Portugal to the liberals. If he listened to the demands of the Portuguese liberals and returned to Lisbon, he feared the resentment against his rule among the Brazilian elite could grow and eventually fuel a separatist movement, as was now common in the rest of Latin

⁸⁰ The difference in their relationship to the extraction of surplus is clear. While the former relied on rents related to occupying state offices or benefitting from the colonial trade pattern, the latter were directly engaged with managing the extraction of surplus from the slaves.

⁸¹ In 1817 planters and landowners facing higher slave prices due to British pressures against slave trade proclaimed a republic in Pernambuco defending “equality of rights” and “property and slavery”. It spread to other provinces, but due to internal fractions and lack of support it was not able to face the army sent from Bahia and surrendered in less than three months (Bethell, 1989, pp. 24–5).

America. He eventually decided to return, arriving in Lisbon on 4 July 1821. From then on, escalation was rather quick. By late September, the *Côrtes* ordered the dissolution of all government bodies installed in Rio, and their transfer to Lisbon. At that point, they had already attempted to revoke the 1810 agreements with Britain and re-establish the Portuguese monopoly on Brazilian trade. When the Brazilian elected deputies started arriving in late 1821 and 1822 they were met with a high degree of hostility and antagonism⁸². These clear signs of a recolonization attempt managed to reinforce the unity between the members of the Brazilian elite, who transferred their allegiance from Dom João to the Prince Regent Dom Pedro. In response, Pedro decided in January 1822 to stay in Rio in defiance to the orders coming for the *Côrtes*, and named a new cabinet of ministers, with José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva, the only Brazilian among them, occupying the most important position (Bethell, 1989, pp. 29–31; Da Cunha, 1997, pp. 165–7).

In fact, there is some evidence in their private correspondence that Dom João anticipated these events, and advised his son to stay in Brazil and, in case the Brazilians radicalised their demands, to stay on their side. This would avoid a revolution such as those found in other (former) colonies, and would keep alive the possibility of keeping both states under the domain of the House of Braganza, and thus the chance of eventually reuniting the empire (Bethell, 1989, p. 31). This is a clear sign of the dynastic calculations of the Braganzas, manoeuvring their position around the political movements on both sides of the Atlantic in order to preserve the continuity of their rule. This thought was already transparent on Dom João's military campaigns in the Plata region in 1816-17, which incorporated the Banda Oriental (currently Uruguay) into Brazil as the Cisplatine Province. The ambitions were larger, however, as the wife of Dom João, Carlota Joaquina, a member of the Spanish Bourbon dynasty, was in constant correspondence with General Vigodet, who was in charge of suppressing the revolutionary movements in America, in hopes of establishing an American Bourbon dynasty under her rule (Adelman, 2010, p. 409; Manchester, 1964, pp. 118–9). There was still a strong absolutist component in the Portuguese court and among its aristocratic allies, which was still clear at this moment in their attempts to expand and perpetuate their geopolitical reach.

⁸² "In the famous words of Manoel Fernandes Thomaz, one of the leaders of the Portuguese liberal revolution, Brazil was a 'land of monkeys, negroes captured in the coast of Africa, and bananas'." (Bethell, 1989, p. 29).

In the first half of 1822 José Bonifácio established his influence in Pedro's cabinet of ministers, standing between the Prince Regent's authoritarianism and the demands for representation coming from Brazilian liberals (Bethell, 1989, p. 32; Da Cunha, 1997, pp. 166–9). Since May, no orders from the *Côrtes* were implemented in Brazil without the express authorisation from the Prince Regent; in June, Pedro called a constituent assembly to draft Brazil's first constitution; and in July, more Brazilians were included in his cabinet. Given the sequence of events, and the rapid escalation of the political crisis between Portugal and Brazil driven by the dominant class interests on both sides of the Atlantic, the announcement of the separation between Brazil and Portugal by Pedro, in September, 7th 1822 is hardly surprising. He was crowned "Constitutional Emperor and Perpetual Defender of Brazil" as Pedro I in December (Bethell, 1989, pp. 32–3).

Despite this series of events, the proclamation of independence and crowning were not indicative of the support for the separation throughout Brazil. The independence was widely supported in the central and southern provinces, but in the coastal areas of the north and northeast, where the *Côrtes* managed to bypass the authority in Rio to some extent and deal directly with regional *Juntas*, a strong Portuguese military presence (the largest one in Brazil, of about 3,500 men) remained loyal to Lisbon. Bahia, for instance, was already divided in a conflict over the naming of the province governor, with different names being appointed by Lisbon and Rio. In March 1823, Lord Cochrane, a veteran captain from the Napoleonic wars, was named First Admiral and Commander-in-Chief of the Brazilian forces, who proceeded to form a blockade in Salvador harbour and later in São Luis (Maranhão) and Belém (Pará). He returned to Rio in November 1823, having played a major role in securing Brazilian independence and territorial unity (Bethell, 1989, pp. 33–6).

The First Empire

Brazilian sovereignty was established in 1823. The reign of Pedro I as emperor of Brazil corresponds to the period known in Brazilian historiography as the "first empire", and it was ridden with political upheavals. Firstly, in the geopolitical arena, there was the issue of achieving international recognition for Brazilian independence, which was the pivot of lengthy negotiations with Portugal, mediated by Britain. Secondly, the domestic scene was even more unstable, as the conflicts between the

Portuguese minority in Rio's bureaucratic elite and the Brazilian regional landed aristocracies fuelled a number of political conflicts, as well as Pedro I's desire for an absolutist empire, like that of his father's ten years earlier.

International Recognition

The same reason that made the Brazilian landed oligarchy favourable to independence – the fear of losing the possibility of dealing directly with non-Portuguese (mostly British) merchants – drove the international recognition of independence. At the same time, it was important to legitimise the rule of Pedro over the whole territory to guarantee its integrity against possible invaders, but also (and most importantly) against local separatist rebels. The importance of Portugal's recognition is then self-evident: while it ensured that there would be no attempts of recolonization, at the same time it weakened the claims of loyalist movements in Brazil. Britain, on the other hand, seen by the Brazilian ruling class as the most influential nation at that time, was considered the strategic place in which diplomatic efforts should be centred. In the words of the Marquês de Barbacena, Dom Pedro's diplomat in London, "With England's friendship we can snap our fingers at the rest of the world (...) it will not be necessary to go begging for recognition from any other power, for all will wish our friendship." In addition, the continental European powers were reluctant to recognise Brazil before Portugal did, as one of the Holy Alliance pillars (as discussed above) was the defence of the sacred rights of absolutist rule⁸³, which, in this case, included the continuity of Portuguese rule over the colony. (Manchester, 1964, pp. 190–3).

Dom João, influenced by his fellow European monarchs, refused to recognise Brazil. The negotiations of 1824, which involved the mediation of Britain and Austria, broke down due to the Portuguese monarch's insistence in maintaining the political subordination of Brazil to Portugal. Brazilian independence was wholeheartedly supported by British Foreign Minister George Canning, for a number of reasons. Firstly, the fear that the Holy Alliance could aid Portugal in recolonizing Brazil; secondly, the need to renegotiate and renew the 1810 treaties in 1825 (Brazil was at

⁸³ Metternich's position on Brazil did not seem to differ much from that of Canning, but he would have been persuaded by the Tzar Alexander I (who referred to D. Pedro as "a rebel and a Parricide") not to recognize Brazil without the acquiescence of D. João. (Manchester, 1964, p. 192).

this point Britain's third largest foreign market); thirdly, Canning feared that European reluctance in recognizing Brazil could trigger another Monroe Doctrine in the South Atlantic⁸⁴; fourthly, there was the possibility that France or Austria might support Brazil before Britain did and strengthen the connections between their dynasties, which could endanger British special favours in Rio (Bethell, 1989, p. 37; Manchester, 1964, pp. 195–7; Pantaleão, 1997, pp. 331–6).

In 1825, due to the need of renewing the trade agreement with Brazil to secure its preferential tariffs, the British renewed their diplomatic efforts to secure Brazilian recognition. Canning instructed his diplomat in Lisbon, Sir Charles Stuart, to obtain from D. João a letter in which he would recognize Brazilian independence (in a way that should “seek to preserve, in both hemispheres, the interests of the family of Bragança”). Otherwise, he should proceed to Rio and negotiate directly with D. Pedro's court. Cornered by what effectually was a British ultimatum, D. João eventually conceded and authorised Stuart to negotiate the Brazilian independence on behalf of Portugal by May 1825 (Manchester, 1964, pp. 198–202; Pantaleão, 1997, pp. 350–1).

Roughly ten days after Stuart arrived in Rio, a treaty was signed in which Portugal recognized the independence of Brazil, and in less than six months Brazil was recognized by all major powers in Europe. However, the price established was high: the total amount of compensations to be paid and debts assumed mounted up to £3 million, and that is for Portugal alone (which gave origin to a series of loans with private bankers in London who played an important role in Brazilian financial policy). Britain demanded even more in return for its support. Canning wanted the renovation

⁸⁴ Although Monroe's original message to Congress in 1823 (which contained what eventually became known as his “doctrine”) was partially motivated by the Holy Alliance's intention of restoring the old regime in Spain (which could possibly include an attempt of re-colonization of Latin America), its initial ambitions were much more restricted to the northern portion of the American continent. Over the following decades, while the U.S. would pursue an active diplomacy in South America establishing trade agreements to its best interests, Monroe's statement would not be mobilized to confront European (particularly British) presence in the region. Throughout the 19th century, Monroe's ideas would only be used as a foreign policy instrument (and therefore reified as a doctrine) in the territorial disputes involving the U.S. in north America, especially those around Texas, Alaska, and the Pacific Coast which involved British, Spanish, Russian and Mexican claims. As in the case of Latin America Canning shared Monroe's concern about the Holy Alliance, he was in favour of recognising its independences. In fact, it was Canning who suggested a joint declaration opposing European intervention in Latin America to a U.S. diplomat in the summer of 1823 (that is, months before Monroe's enunciation). Also, it was only through the actions of the British navy that the Monroe doctrine could effectively enforced (and violated) in South America. For this reasons, in this particular context it can be said that Canning was not concerned with the Monroe doctrine *per se*, but with the use Brazilian rulers might make of it (Herring, 2011, pp. 154–7; Sexton, 2011).

of the 1810 treaties, maintaining all the commercial and legal privileges for British merchants (which was ultimately signed in 1827), and, more importantly, the end of slavery. The latter, a clear attack on the interests of Brazilian landowner class, was settled in a treaty in 1826⁸⁵, according to which all slave trade would become illegal in three years (Bethell, 1989, p. 40; Manchester, 1964, pp. 202–3; Pantaleão, 1997, pp. 353–60; Summerhill, 2015).

The pressure towards the abolition of slave trade was an essential element of the diplomatic relations between Brazil and Britain – in fact, of British diplomacy in general – over the first half of the 19th century. This abolitionist diplomacy grew in the early 1800s out of the increased security concern over British colonies with a high number of slaves after the influence of the French and Haitian Revolution made slave rebellions a real possibility in the minds of slaves and their colonial and metropolitan masters. In the face of this threat, it seemed dangerous to continue bringing more slaves into the colonies, fuelling their revolutionary potential. It was also an important part of the Anglo-French rivalry, especially in regard of the control over production and trade of the colonial produce of the “West Indies”: as in 1805 the slave population of French and Spanish colonies in the Caribbean would amount to around 350,000 in total, the British colonies had around 715,000 slaves. Therefore, the abolition of the slave trade would secure the advantage of British West Indian planters in terms of access to labour in the colonies. For these reasons it became a fundamental aspect of the peace negotiations with Napoleonic France. After the victory in the battle of Trafalgar (1805) and the abolition of slave trade within the British Empire (1807), there was a consensus in British Parliament that the protection of the interests of West Indian planters through the international expansion of the ban on Atlantic slave trade could be enforced through its naval superiority. However, as shown here, in cases such as Portugal and Brazil in which there was a strong dependence of this trade, this abolitionist pressures had to be balanced against the need to secure both stable (and favourable) trade relations, as well as their alliance against Napoleon (Blackburn, 1988, pp. 300–18).

Furthermore, it is interesting to note how the social and geopolitical roots of British abolitionist diplomacy in the first half of the 19th century impacts the

⁸⁵ As a result, slave trade was strongly intensified in the latter 1820s. In early 1830s, however, its numbers decreased not as a result of prohibition, but of a decreased demand (Bethell and De Carvalho, 1989, p. 94). The prohibition would only be effective after 1850.

discussion on how to interpret Britain's foreign policy more broadly. This account substantiates the notion that it should be seen as a constant power balancing against other European powers in order to secure its formal and informal empire, in accord with the class interests represented in parliament. Contrarily, the neo-Gramscian narrative that depicts it as a bourgeois hegemonic project of free trade and liberalism is weakened (Cox, 1981, 1987). Rather than manipulating the European balance of power in order to promote liberal ideas and values, Britain was securing advantages for its own planters, manufacturers and traders, which in turn often reinforced class structures of the *ancient régimes* by inserting them in the British-dominated international division of labour (Lacher and Germann, 2012).

The Brazilian independence, as discussed above, is a product of the dissatisfaction of its ruling classes with Portuguese colonialism. It was constructed by its landed slave-owners in an alliance with a section of the old bureaucratic aristocracy that had stronger ties to Pedro than to his father, João. Not surprisingly, the foreign policy of that young state would also be an amalgam of the geopolitical expression of the interests of both classes, which can be seen in the outcome of these lengthy negotiations. The landowners could secure the international recognition they needed, even if for a high price, while the aristocracy managed to be recognised as a legitimate new branch of the Braganza monarchy. However, as it will soon become clear, their interests had also many points of conflict. Brazil's main source of revenue came from taxation, which means that the reparations paid to Portugal would eventually fall on the landowners' own economic activity and revenue; furthermore, the 1826 agreement reached about the end of slave trade would be extremely damaging to their productive capabilities. As the stability of Pedro I on the throne in Rio depended on their support, on the other hand, the traffic of slaves would continue well into the 1840s and would become the main point of Anglo-Brazilian relations (Bethell and De Carvalho, 1989, pp. 100–4); and Brazil would develop its banking system in order to finance its debt by borrowing money from private bankers in London, postponing the debt crisis until much later in the century (Summerhill, 2015). There was one point, though, in which their difference seemed irreconcilable. Pedro I did not abdicate his succession rights to the Portuguese throne, which left open the possibility of reuniting Brazil and Portugal at a later point through the lineage of the House of Braganza. This was unacceptable for a good part of the Brazilian elite, and would soon feed into the open

– sometimes violent – social conflict between the “Portuguese” and “Brazilian” faction in Rio.

Social Outcomes of Sovereign Statehood

Given the social composition of the group which supported the Brazilian independence, it should come as no surprise that the *grande lavoura* based on slave labour and export monocultures survived the Brazilian transition towards sovereignty unscathed. In fact, slave imports were increasing during the first quarter of the 19th century, signalling an overall growth in plantations. However, this period also brings two significant changes. Firstly, shortly before the independence, the *sesmaria* system of royal land concession was abolished. All the other norms that regulated the previous concessions were still effective, but no new grants could be made. Up until the Land Law in 1850, the only form of acquiring more land would be by dispossessing previous occupiers. The original intent of the *sesmarias*, when they were created in late medieval Portugal, was to intensify the ties between the peasant population and their allocated land, conditioning their property over land to their productive use of it (Disney, 2009a, pp. 115–6), but their introduction in colonial Brazil had the unintended outcome of turning into a form of highly fragmented and localised political authority (Gorender, 1978, pp. 364–9; Smith, 2008, pp. 159–60). In a context in which each plantation landowner commanded a large group of independent planters and tenant farmers through an informal patriarchal network of favours and coercion, the attempts of the Crown to regulate property over land by exacting the limits of each property represented an impediment to further private accumulation⁸⁶. This period of a “legal vacuum” on land property between 1822 and 1850 is actually a period of intense dispossession and land accumulation by members of the landed elite (Smith, 2008, pp. 160–7; Vergara-Camus, 2012, p. 1139). The 1850 law that inaugurates the principle of absolute private property over land will be discussed in the next chapter⁸⁷.

⁸⁶ According to Motta, “[f]or the landowners, what mattered was not measuring and demarcating property as the lawmakers desired. Measuring and demarcating, following the demands imposed by the rules of *sesmarias* meant, for *sesmeiros*, accepting a limit to their territorial expansion, kneeling to the general interests of such a distant Crown” (Motta, 1998, p. 38)

⁸⁷ The fact that such an absolute notion of property was already applied to slaves is a revealing aspect of the social property relations in Brazil. As Gorender makes clear, the slave was no contingent fact of production. It was property over slaves, not over land or capital, that determined control over production in Brazilian society. (Gorender, 1978, p. 213; Smith, 2008, p. 165)

Secondly, during the first quarter of the 19th century the memory of the Haitian Revolution was still very much alive in the minds of the Brazilian ruling class. In Britain, as seen above, the fear of another slave revolution led to a discussion about abolishing the slave trade (at first, and later slavery itself). In Brazil, on the other hand, the concern was a lot more present in the lives of the landowners, merchants, and from 1808 onwards, Portuguese aristocracy. It was common for slaves to escape *quilombos*, sometimes murdering their overseers and masters in the process; and with the increased number of imported African slaves, these acts of resistance were increasingly common in the first decades of the 19th century. As the proportion of free whites in the population could be as low as 30% – in Salvador, for instance (Reis, 1986, p. 16) – the fear of an “inversion of the social and political order, and generalized vengeance against whites” was a common sentiment among the elites. This fear of a widespread slave insurrection was well documented in many administrative documents of that time, as well as in the writings of Brazilian intellectuals in books and newspapers (de Azevedo, 1987, pp. 35–7). In this first moment, the general consensus identified the necessity of rescuing these large portion of the population from their “abject, useless and isolated lifestyles, integrating them into a united, harmonious and progressive society”. Of course, the “harmonious and progressive society” they had in mind was one in which the large-scale production of export commodities in *latifúndios* could proceed undisturbed, once the issues around slavery (or whatever regime of labour that could be found as an alternative) were resolved. Slavery was seen as a problem, as it created a “social heterogeneity” and a possibility of revolt that endangered the white minority, but the masses of free workers that devoted themselves to subsistence farming (either as tenant farmers or in small properties) were also seen as a symptom of Brazilian backwardness:

“(…) systematic repression over those without a ‘clear path in life’ – that is, those who only cared about themselves, refusing to be subjected to a discipline of labour in someone else’s property – should cultivate, throughout time, a ‘labour mentality’ in population. It was needed to incorporate the poor population to the way of life ascribed by the ruling elites.

(…)

In sum, there should be a decisive and systematic effort from the State in order to educate, shape, and civilize its ruled population, controlling and disciplining their daily lives so they could become effectively useful to the nation: integrating, as laborious masses, a superior national reason.” (de Azevedo, 1987, pp. 48–9)

In these accounts left by the Brazilian elite, both slaves and free workers are held as lazy, selfish, and prone to vices of every sort. For that reason, since the days of D. João in Rio, this pedagogical effort of educating the population to labour was

generally seen as a lost cause. A preferred alternative was to provide incentives to European migration, but, despite the growth of slavery, even those would remain timid until well into the 1840s (de Azevedo, 1987, pp. 63–6; Oberacker Jr., 1997).

The relation between the elites (including large landowners, merchants and aristocrats) and the working classes (encompassing free and slave workers) is crucial for understanding the historical transformation of the Brazilian society. This vertical class struggle, the class struggle in its most classic and direct meaning: between owners and direct producers, however, only explains the development of state institutions up to a certain extent. By limiting the analysis to that lens, one cannot explain, for instance, the way in which Brazil became a unified sovereign state, in spite of the many regional oligarchies pleading for more autonomy from the centralized government in Rio. For a better understanding of how Brazilian statehood was shaped in its early years, it is necessary to encompass the “horizontal” aspect of class struggle. The competition between the regional landed oligarchies and the bureaucratised aristocracy that revolved around the political authority of the Crown (embodied in the nearest representative of the House of Braganza, Pedro, first as Prince Regent, and later as the Emperor of Brazil), in putting two groups in conflict to the extent in which their social practices of reproduction are mutually exclusive, must be understood as class struggle (Wood, 1999). This analysis of intra-elite class struggle is precisely the focus of the next section.

The disputes between ‘Brazilians’ and ‘Portuguese’

The political scenario in Rio de Janeiro in the 1820s was very unstable due to the ongoing struggle between the Brazilian and Portuguese elites over the control of the Empire. The opposition against Portugal involving the issue of sovereignty generated a common interest around which the different sectors of the elite could unite, but such union did not extend to the issues raised when designing the structure of the state’s political institutions. The first open manifestation of such struggle over the control of state institutions took place in the constituent assembly gathered by Dom Pedro in 1823, but they continued throughout the decade, eventually culminating in Pedro’s abdication and return to Portugal in 1831.

Initially, it should be noted that calling the two contending groups “Portuguese” and “Brazilian” does not mean that they were clearly divided by their

respective places of birth. Rather, it is based on their support of the authority of the Portuguese Emperor; or on the political decentralisation of the Empire, favouring the Brazilian landowners of each province. The first group was composed mostly by merchants and high officers of the state who were in their majority Portuguese-born, but it was not restricted to them. For instance, in order to increase its base of support, the Emperor openly used his prerogative of granting nobility titles: more than two-thirds of the titles granted during his reign are from 1825-6 (Bethell and De Carvalho, 1989, p. 55). Furthermore, the monarchy was popular among a vast majority of the elite which saw it as the main instrument for the maintenance of order throughout the whole territory, and Pedro – still regarded as the “hero of independence” – was the only Braganza in a position to rule it. In short what binds this group together is a common strategy of subsistence and reproduction based on its reliance on the imperial bureaucracy’s authority as a guardian of social order and political stability.

On the other hand, the landowners from other provinces shared the sentiment that such a centralised, indeed absolutist government was not to the best of their interest. Instead, they would rather have a “liberal” constitution limiting the powers of the Emperor and granting them a stronger control over national affairs and, more importantly, maintaining their local authority. This “Brazilian faction” was in no way revolutionary. On the contrary, they were members of the landowning ruling class that sought to preserve their benefits reaped from the colonial social-property relations of slave-based export plantations; the reforms they sought would only cause the state to reflect more directly their own aims (Bethell, 1989, p. 27). Although some members of this elite already espoused republican ideals, they were only a small minority. They were also united in their financial troubles: Brazilian exports were falling steadily throughout the 1820s – except for coffee. The latter saw its trade volume triple in the same period, but, as by that time it was still cultivated mostly in the Rio de Janeiro province, it instigated the opposition between a fraction of the elite surrounding the Emperor in Rio, and another one, scattered around the capitals of other provinces (Bethell and De Carvalho, 1989, p. 55).

These two conflicting visions of how the Empire should be ruled met each other in the constituent assembly, which was inaugurated by Pedro I in May 1823. In his speech, he sets out a clear task for the constituents: to draft a constitution to his liking. One in which he can, in his role as Emperor, protect Brazil from the threat of “anarchy”:

“As Constitutional Emperor, and especially as Perpetual Defender of this Empire, I told the people in the 1st December of last year, when I was crowned, that I would use my sword to defend the Homeland, the Nation and the Constitution, *if it was worthy of Brazil and of me* (...), a Constitution in which the three powers are well divided (...), with real barriers to despotism, be it royal, aristocratic, or democratic, and, breaking away from anarchy, plants the seed of the freedom in which shade the union, tranquillity and independence of this Empire shall prosper to the astonishment of both the new and the old worlds.

(...)

All the constitutions that have followed the models established in 1791 and 1792, were shown to us to be completely theoretical and metaphysical, and therefore impracticable: this can be seen in France, in Spain, and, lately, in Portugal. They do not accomplish, as they should, general happiness, but, after a period of ungoverned freedom, they pave the way to despotism as had already happened in some and is bound to happen in others. As a necessary consequence, people are left to the sad situation of witnessing and suffering the horrors of anarchy. (...) I hope the Constitution you draft is worthy of my Imperial acceptance.” (Da Cunha, 1997, p. 184).

The Emperor’s behaviour, often favouring his closest friends, made the situation even more confrontational. José Bonifácio, his first Brazilian cabinet member, resigned in July after many attempts to prevent the Emperor from expressing such a clear favouritism for the Portuguese in Rio⁸⁸. Just like his appointment had been a sign of pro-Brazilian intentions by Pedro in 1822, his resignation in 1823 contributed to the antagonism between the two groups (Bethell and De Carvalho, 1989, p. 50).

With these tensions, the constituent assembly was dissolved in November 1823 and some of its members (like José Bonifácio and his brothers) were arrested. Instead, Pedro imposed a constitution written by himself in March 1824, which gave him full powers to take any matter of the Empire into his own hand – known as the “*Poder Moderador*”. The authority the Emperor held over every sort of legal and political affairs as a result, and the authoritarian way he dealt with the members of the assembly were not acceptable for a large portion of the Brazilian ruling class, which condemned his behaviour as too absolutist (Bethell and De Carvalho, 1989, pp. 50–1; Faoro, 2001, pp. 331–40; Fausto, 1999, p. 155). In fact, the dissolution of the constituent assembly sparked an armed revolt in Pernambuco with supported of other neighbouring provinces, which led to the proclamation of an independent republic in the northeast, the Confederation of the Equator (Da Cunha, 1997, pp. 187–9). The writings of one of the leaders of the rebels, Frei Caneca, reveal the deep discontent with Pedro’s constitution, accusing it and the institutions defined by it as “contrary to the principles of liberty”, “oppressor of the people”, and “Machiavellian” (Frei Caneca, 1976, pp.

⁸⁸ Even if Bonifácio himself abhorred the idea of a constitution tending to the liberal and democratic aspirations of the landowners, he saw their support as necessary for the stability of the Empire (Bethell and De Carvalho, 1989, p. 49).

93–108). The rebellion was repressed by imperial troops in six months; however, it illustrates perfectly the tension existing between the centralised imperial bureaucracy and the regional oligarchies.

In the following years, a number of other events aggravated the tensions between these two factions of Brazilian politics. Pedro did not give up his rights to the Portuguese throne after the independence, which sparked fears of recolonization. These fears were intensified after his father, the king of Portugal Dom João VI died in 1826. Popular discontent was rising due to the economic policy of the Empire, which, after the constitution of 1824 and the aforementioned treaties of 1826 and 1827, protected the interests of British manufacturers and creditors more than those of the Brazilian ruling classes (Bethell and De Carvalho, 1989, p. 56; Summerhill, 2015, pp. 24–5). As a result of this increasing social tension, Pedro started considering abandoning Brazil to secure the throne of Portugal for himself. As this tension culminated in episodes of violent conflict in the streets of Rio in early 1831, he did precisely that, abdicating the throne of Brazil in favour of his son, Pedro II in 7th April and leaving to Lisbon on board of the *HMS Warspite*⁸⁹, effectively ending the First Empire (Barman, 1988, p. 154; Bethell and De Carvalho, 1989, pp. 56–8).

The Regency

Pedro II was only five years old when his father left to Lisbon and a regency was put in place to rule Brazil until his coming of age, that is, in the 12 years between 1831 and 1843⁹⁰. As the monarchy provided an element of national cohesion, the empty throne facilitated the eruption of local class struggles into violent conflicts, revolts and insurrections, which made of the regency the most agitated period in Brazilian history. Although a number of these struggles have made important marks in Brazilian historiography and in the regional identities of some regions, it is impossible to detail how many episodes of violent rebellion took place in Brazil in the 1830s and 1840s because, due to their localised and fragmented aspects, it would require a degree of detailed archival research that, so far, has not been systematically conducted. This section will begin by outlining the political reforms debated during

⁸⁹ As Bethell and De Carvalho (1989, p. 58) remark, “The British navy was always on hand, it seems, when there was any need of transporting Portuguese or Brazilian royalty across the Atlantic”.

⁹⁰ Pedro II was in fact crowned earlier, in 1841.

the Regency and how the two parties that dominate the Second Empire – the liberals and the conservatives – are born. Then, I proceed to the difficult task of speaking of such wide variety of insurrections in a general way. At last, one of them is discussed in further detail, for its uniqueness clearly stands out among the rest. Out of the major rebellions of this period, the Malês Revolt in Salvador is remarkable for being made mostly by African workers, of which approximately 60% were slaves (Reis, 1986, p. 205).

The political disputes during the Regency

Around the abdication of Pedro I, a lot of violent confrontations between his supporters and his opponents took place in the streets of Rio⁹¹. In some time, as the news of these events reached the distant regions of the country, similar clashes were repeated elsewhere. This generated a first wave of violent clashes in the 1830s, generally in the form of anti-Portuguese protests (although there were restorationist rebellions, the *Cabanos*, in Recife being the most important example) with the participation of urban free workers and the lower ranks of the military. The intensity of these manifestations varied in accordance to Portuguese presence and influence in society, being stronger in places such as Rio, and in the Northeast, and generally weaker in the South (Bethell and De Carvalho, 1989, pp. 58–61).

Despite these local conflicts, a regency was put in place in 1831, supported by the class of landowners who backed Pedro I in the independence, but were growing weary of his absolutism. They shared an interest in decentralizing the political institutions of the Empire, reducing the control of the Emperor over the provinces, some of them being attracted to federalism. However, as most of them had economic ties to Rio, they had no interest in dismantling the Empire, but in reforming the 1824 constitution to grant more participation to local oligarchies in central government (or rather, to grant the former domination over the latter). Being the strongest group in the Chamber of Deputies, these “moderate liberals” controlled the Regency from its beginning, and, as “moderates”, they faced opposition from both sides. A faction of “radical liberals” included some republicans and representatives of local oligarchies with weaker ties to Rio, and therefore, to the unity of the Empire. On the other hand,

⁹¹ The most notorious of these episodes, for instance, became known as the “night of bottle-throwing”.

a group of “conservatives” was composed by representatives of imperial bureaucrats and aristocrats, especially high officers of the army and magistrates, whose interests lied in the centralised political structures around the Emperor in Rio. In this last group included some defenders of Pedro I’s return until his death in 1834 (Bethell and De Carvalho, 1989, pp. 61–63).

Between 1831 and 1834 this group of moderate liberals implemented a number of reforms that changed the political structure of the Empire. They changed the judicial system, with a new Criminal Code and a new Code of Criminal Procedure that protected political opposition from the arbitrary rule of centralised government, and granted more power to locally elected magistrates weakening the influence of the centrally appointed judges from Rio. Provincial assemblies were created, with much more power than the previous provincial administrative bodies, including the appointment of public officials and a revenue sharing system between provinces and the imperial government. The provincial presidents were still centrally appointed. The army was also targeted by these reforms, for its high officers in Rio were an important pillar of imperial absolutism, while its lower ranks stationed around the provinces were too prone to radicalisation. The solution was the formation of the National Guard, drawing from the French law of 1831 the idea of allowing the social order to be defended by propertied citizens. Charged with defending “the Constitution, the Liberty, Independence and Integrity of the Empire”, they were under the authority of provincial assemblies and represented a decentralization of the military authority, law enforcement and direct coercion. They quickly became an element of patronage at regional level, used as private military forces of the dominant local oligarchs in their disputes. As Bethell and De Carvalho put it, “If before 1831 the instruments of law and order were in the oppressive hand of the central government, they now fell into the oppressive hands of the locally powerful” (Bethell and De Carvalho, 1989, pp. 63–7; Martins de Faria, 2007, pp. 142–7; Viotti da Costa, 2000, pp. 150–5)

The political decentralization caused by the reforms of the liberal regency tipped the frail political balance of the Empire. With increased powers at the local level, the oligarchies with weaker ties to Rio now were in better conditions to attempt to break free from imperial control. From 1835 onwards, a second wave of rebellions swept the country, this time threatening the political unity of the Empire:

“(…) the fragile political unity of the empire was seriously threatened. In 1835 provincial revolts broke out in the extreme north and the extreme south of the country, Pará and Rio Grande do Sul. They were followed by revolts in Bahia (in 1837) and Maranhão (in 1838).

The most radical and violent rebellions in Brazilian history, before or since, these four were merely the most serious of a series of provincial disturbances which, although their roots went deeper, significantly followed the implementation of the liberal reforms and especially the Additional Act of 1834. Their differences reflected the different conflicts and tensions within a variety of provincial social (and racial) structures. All, however, were federalist, and several, including the most serious and prolonged, were frankly secessionist or at least had distinct separatist overtones.” (Bethell and De Carvalho, 1989, p. 68).

The insurrections of the 1830s can be divided between those of a first wave against the remains of Portuguese absolutism into the First Empire, and a second wave, in which they were turned against the Empire itself assuming federalist and separatist tones⁹². However, due to the short period that comprises them, this distinction is not always clear. As mentioned above, due to their many manifestations and regional peculiarities, it is impossible to discuss them in detail⁹³. Drawing from the treatment given to them by Brazilian historiography, it is important at least to highlight a few general points about these rebellions. Firstly, it would be mistaken to depict any of them as merely intra-elite disputes. In all of them, the rebellious group had the participation of rural and urban workers (free or slave), as well as landowners. Of course, the power relation between these components varied greatly between each region, but they were all, in some degree, dominated by local oligarchies. None of them threatened the social order established around land property and slave labour (Barman, 1988, pp. 169–188; Bethell and De Carvalho, 1989, pp. 68–75; Schwarcz and Starling, 2015; Skidmore, 2010, pp. 43–6).

Although all the uprisings in the period had the support of the working classes in different degrees⁹⁴, it is important not to assume that they were the main expression of workers’ resistance in the period. Slave resistance was a constant element of Brazilian society since the 16th century and continued throughout the 19th century, especially in the forms of murder of their white masters and overseers, and escaping to *quilombos*. These were often carefully plotted and premeditated by slaves, either in

⁹² For this reason, although the central provinces of the Empire – Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais and São Paulo – see a great number of uprisings of the “first wave”, those in the “second wave” are almost exclusive to peripheral provinces, such as Pará, Pernambuco, Maranhão and Rio Grande do Sul.

⁹³ Bethell and De Carvalho (1989, pp. 68–75) focus on four of them: *Cabanagem* (Pará), *Farroupilha* (Rio Grande do Sul), *Sabinada* (Bahia) and *Balaia* (Maranhão). These same four are highlighted by Schwarcz and Starling (2015), and by Skidmore (2010). Barman (1988, p. 170) focusing more on the political instability that plagued the Regency than on the specificity of each of these rebellions, mentions “five risings in the national capital, two major revolts in Ceará and Pernambuco, as well as lesser conflicts in other provinces” just between July 1831 and July 1832.

⁹⁴ The Cabanagem, or Cabanos’ War is a peculiar case. Although it had strong support from communities of fugitive slaves, as well as natives and *caboclos*, its leaders repressed slave insurrections when they occurred (Bethell and De Carvalho, 1989, p. 70).

small groups or, in a few cases, large communities. The most remarkable among the latter during the 19th century is the *Malês'* Revolt (Klein and Luna, 2010, pp. 206–10; Reis, 1986). Drawing upon a series of large slave uprisings in Salvador and its surrounding regions since 1807, the “Malês” (a common denomination for Muslim Africans in Salvador) attempted to take Salvador in 1835. It is impossible to identify with precision the goals of those African workers⁹⁵. Their organization clearly came from their common identity as *malês*: slaves, Africans, and Muslims (although their ethnicity divided them: the Hausa and Nago were a majority, while the Banto were only a few). The uprising was built upon the base of their common identity, which spread among slaves in Salvador and nearby plantations in the first half of the 1830s, and in 1834 they began to plot a rebellion which aimed not only at Salvador, but included the surrounding *Recôncavo Baiano* region as well:

“From then onwards the *malê* leadership began to define their objectives more clearly. The action of the conspiracy should go beyond Salvador. It was clear for them that a strictly urban uprising would fail, as it would exclude the biggest portion of African population in the mills and villages of the *Recôncavo*. The strategy of rebellion was preceded by the expansion of Muslim religion. The *malês* had made more adepts, constituting a base of support beyond the capital. ‘Throughout the whole *Recôncavo*’, confessed Carlos, a slave, ‘there are emissaries to spread the *malê* society (...) and some of them say that when the moment comes, those from the *Recôncavo* will come to help those in this city.’” (Reis, 1986, pp. 140–1)

Their plot reached the ears of the provincial president a few hours before a few hundred slaves started marching through the streets of Salvador. Security had been reinforced in strategic areas of the city, such as the provincial palace and the prison. As only a few of the slaves had weapons, the clashes quickly turned into a manhunt throughout the streets of Salvador. The estimates are of at least 70 deaths in about three hours of fighting in the many parts of the city, with a total of five of six hundred slaves taking place in them all around the city (there was no single moment in which they stood together)⁹⁶. In the following repression, 231 black workers (129 slaves) were arrested for participating in the rebellion, with the most common sentences being deportation, corporal punishments, and death (occurring in significantly different

⁹⁵ There attacked many different places in Salvador - squares, markets, the provincial palace, prisons, fortifications – rather than focusing their efforts on taking any single one of them. A note written in Arab seems to reveal that, in spreading their efforts throughout the city, they aimed at agitating as many slaves as possible, and then escaping the city collectively into the surrounding farms of the *Recôncavo* (Reis, 1986, p. 104).

⁹⁶ It can be a small number relative to the total population of around 22,000 African slaves in Salvador in 1835, but the difficulties involved in mobilising such a large number of slaves from different occupations and in different parts of the city should be taken in consideration (Reis, 1986, p. 107).

proportion between slaves and free workers). The documents demonstrate how the authorities in Salvador and in Rio were worried about punishing those rebels with haste and notoriety, seeing themselves as true guardians of civilization against barbarism, and fearing that such a widespread slave rebellion could happen again (de Azevedo, 1987; Reis, 1986).

In the Imperial capital, the uprisings during the Regency period were seen as a direct outcome of the liberal reforms between 1831 and 1834. All of them, regardless of being “merely” segregationist such as the *Farroupilha* or a frontal attack on the social property relations such the rebellion of *Malê* slaves, appeared to the ruling classes of the Empire as a threat of “anarchy”. Both the social order and the territorial unity of the Empire were in danger. As a result, the support for the liberals in government dwindled quickly. Their reforms were blamed by the social turmoil of the period, and the conservatives managed to replace them defending a “return to order”⁹⁷ (*i.e.*, to a strong centralised authority) (Bethell and De Carvalho, 1989, p. 76). As one of the liberal reforms was precisely the advent of direct elections to congress, those were held in 1835 and 1837, resulting in victories for the conservative camp⁹⁸.

In fact, a comparison between the two candidates in 1837, Pedro de Araújo Lima (who wins the election for the conservatives) and Holanda Cavalcanti (for the liberals) is very revealing: both are from Pernambuco, being members of its local sugar oligarchy. Araújo Lima, however, was educated in Coimbra and had already been part of the Pernambucan commission to the Portuguese Cortes in 1821. Holanda Cavalcanti, on the other side, had no higher education and was more devoted to managing his own lands than getting involved in Imperial politics in Rio, being known for his defence of political decentralization (and even secession) (Bethell and De Carvalho, 1989, p. 77). Even though both of them are members of the colonial landowning elite, their distinct political ties to the imperial institutions configure two different social classes to the extent that their social reproduction became an obstacle

⁹⁷ The motto “order and progress”, however, would only appear later, with the positivist influence over the republican movement in the late 1880s.

⁹⁸ The regent elected in 1835, Diego Feijó, still a moderate liberal, was elected with 2826 votes, against 2251 of his radical liberal adversary, Holanda Cavalcanti (a landowner from Pernambuco)(Fausto, 1999, p. 171). According to the electoral laws of the time, there were a total of 300,000 citizens with the right to vote, which corresponded to 10% of the population (De Carvalho, 2011, p. 46). Feijó lost control of congress due to a perceived reluctance of his part to suppress the rebellions (one of the *Farroupilha* leaders was his cousin). After the death of one of his main supporters, he resigned in 1837 triggering a new election and supporting a conservative to replace him (Bethell and De Carvalho, 1989, pp. 76–7).

to that of the other. To understand the formation of Brazilian political institutions during the 19th century, this intra-elite or “horizontal” class struggle is as important as the “vertical” one.

After reinforcing the repression against the regional rebellions, the conservative Regency begins its reaction against the liberal reforms of the earlier portion of the 1830s, reducing again the autonomy granted to provinces. The only institution that survived the conservative reaction was the national guard, but now under stronger control of the local elites: their officers were no longer elected, but appointed by the provincial president with no participation of the provincial assemblies. Fearing an intensification of conservative measures, the liberal minority in parliament agreed to promote prematurely Pedro II’s coming of age, in what became known as the *golpe da maioridade*. This idea had been defended by conservatives since 1835 as a form of reinforcing the unity of the Empire against secessionism in the provinces, and as a political manoeuvre to end the conservative regency, it was not supported by the liberals. It was this “parliamentary coup” which ended the Regency period, and gave start to the Second Empire, under the 15-year-old Pedro II (Bethell and De Carvalho, 1989, pp. 78–80).

Conclusion

The core theoretical debate that underlines this chapter refers to the kind of historical investigation that provides a better picture of the formation of the international system of states, which has been a central point of discussion in IR/IHS. I have argued so far that such a historical approach must hold a firm commitment to the agencies of social groups in their disputes around the conditions of their own reproduction and around the broader social and institutional context of their relations (*i.e.*, class struggle and the shaping of social property relations). This argument is presented as a challenge to other forms of connecting history and social theory in the discipline of IR that fall short of the radical historicism proposed by Political Marxism (Lacher, 2006; Teschke, 2005, 2014; Teschke and Cemgil, 2014). Among those, the post-colonial tradition and some Marxists still privilege overarching narratives (the persistence of “coloniality” for the former, or the expansion of capitalism for the latter) without tracing them sufficiently to particular social actors, which results in a teleological reading of history as a self-realising prophecy. It also engaged with Neo-

Weberian Historical Sociology and the English School of IR. In these traditions historicism is, at best, limited to the level of territorial sovereign entities, with social processes being only integrated in an *ad hoc* basis and without clear reference to the specific agencies in each process⁹⁹. At worst, it is completely disregarded in favour of a structuralist account of international relations based on Realism's assumptions about an anarchical state-system.

My theoretical argument sustains that an account of a process of Brazilian state-formation must come from the intersection of the many instances of social and geopolitical conflict that shape it. At the same time, my historical argument shows how 1808, 1822, and 1831 are important moments of this process; none of them can be singled out as the decisive breakthrough to a different historical era (be it a capitalist, modern or post-colonial one), but all of them have to be acknowledged as parts of an ongoing transformation. Just like there was no single logic of colonialism governing the relationship between Portugal and its colonies, there was also no overarching logic determining the steps or the goal of the transformation that was taking place in the first half of the 19th century. The history of Brazilian state-formation can only be understood from the perspective of the many situated agencies involved in its making, both through the innovations made by them when faced with particular circumstances and through the unintended consequences of these innovations.

The chapter argued that, after Pedro I's death in 1834, the defence of his return to the Brazilian throne – already a very marginal position by that time – becomes impracticable, extinguishing the claims of “recolonization”, with the *caramurus*, as its supporters were known, being absorbed by the nascent conservative party (Bethell and De Carvalho, 1989, p. 65). The Brazilian oligarchy composed mostly of slave-owning *latifundiários* was finally free from the main adversary with whom they had fought for control over political institutions. During the Regency, this oligarchy's access to the

⁹⁹ For example, the way in which the recent English School/Constructivist literature draws on “civilizational” discourses of nationhood (Schulz, 2014; Stroikos, 2014) or moral notions of individual rights (Reus-Smit, 1999, 2011, 2013) to justify a transformation in political institutions, in isolation from the whole context of disputes about forms of social reproduction in which they exist. Both Schulz (2014) and Reus-Smit (2011, 2013) effectively depart radically from the classic English School argument about Latin America present in the works by Bull and Watson (1984) and Gong (1984). However, although the reasons presented for that departure are linked to the construction of an identity around nationhood, and the disputes around individual rights that involve ideas of race and class, neither make the effort of rethinking the premises of their international theory in order to accommodate these disputes as a privileged stage of history. Instead, the narratives of both authors remain restricted to the level of international institutions, with social disputes introduced *ad hoc* to circumvent occasional obstacles.

innermost circles of state power was no longer mediated by the Emperor's authority. In other words, the former's social and geopolitical goals were not constrained by those of the latter and its supporters. This becomes clear in the analysis of the shift in Brazil's relation with Britain both on the issues of the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade and trade policy after the treaty of 1827. Therefore, the end of the First Empire can be seen as an important step in the process of "independence". Not as the formal independence of the state, nor as a birth of a new, post-colonial, nation; but as the independence of one ruling class from another. Of course, it does not mean in any way that this oligarchy is perfectly cohesive in its social and geopolitical practices, as shown by the constant disputes between liberals and conservatives during the Regency, and throughout most of the Second Empire.

The crowning of Pedro II – a Brazilian-born emperor initiated in his role as head of state by the debates between liberals and conservatives during the Regency – in 1840 marks the transition towards the Second Empire. During the next 49 years that stand between Pedro II's crowning and the fall of the Empire, Brazil will witness the consolidation of coffee as its main export commodity, with the consequent hegemony of the "coffee barons" in domestic politics. It is also in this period that the colonial social formations go through its first major rupture. In 1888 the abolition of slavery sweeps one of the main pillars of Brazil's "colonial slave-based mode of production", without, however, putting an end to the colonial traces of Brazilian society – that is, without representing a "transition to capitalism". In order to present that argument, the next chapter will need to further unpack what this transition actually means, and how it was enacted in the Brazilian context.

Chapter 5: Who made the Republic? – Coffee, Slavery, and the Making of a New Brazilian Ruling Class in Late 19th Century (1841-1889)

Introduction

If the legal consolidation of Brazilian sovereignty comes with the widespread international recognition in the 1820s, the political consolidation of Brazil as a sovereign political unit – a monarchy under a South American branch of the House of Braganza – only comes later, with the crowning of the young Pedro II in 1841¹⁰⁰. Up until this point, the social and economic foundations of the Brazilian Empire did not differ from those of the late moments of the colonial period – from the final quarter of the 18th century and onwards. In the second half of the 19th century, however, the social conditions upon which independence was arranged and territorial sovereignty consolidated went through substantial changes, which are essential for understanding the fall of the monarchy and the rise of the republic in 1889. In particular, I argue that transformations in the form of property over land and the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade – both in 1850 – paved the way to the ascension of a different class of landowners, namely, the coffee planters in the western part of the São Paulo province. And neither the rise of coffee as the backbone commodity of Brazilian economy (a position it would hold until well into the twentieth century) with all the changes that it brought to the Brazilian society at large, nor the social transformation caused by the demise of slavery as a form of surplus extraction can be understood without their connections to wider geopolitical disputes. The most important of those is the stronger presence of British financial capital backed by its (informal) imperialism, but the Civil War in the United States and the European revolutions in mid-19th century are also significant factors that must not be separated from, but intertwined with the transformation of Brazilian ruling classes in late 19th century.

This transformation discussed here could be broadly described as the initial stages of the Brazilian transition towards capitalism. Capitalism here is understood as the set of social property relations created in the English countryside over the 17th century where forms of appropriation and exploitation change towards the market

¹⁰⁰ Even though separatist movements still persisted at least until 1845. For a notion of what constituted the Brazilian territory and its political divisions throughout most of the 19th century, see Map 2 in the Annex.

dependence of both direct producers and appropriating classes, resulting in a competitive pressure to increase productivity (Wood, 2002b). Of course, to speak of a “Brazilian transition” is misleading, as the conditions existing in England are never reproduced. What I mean here is a process of historical change where the pressures from British geopolitics (both from its parliamentary foreign policy, as well as from the actions of its merchants and bankers¹⁰¹) produces major qualitative changes in Brazilian social property relations. This is not to say that they are reshaping the Brazilian society after their own plans¹⁰². The changes that appear in this period are a result of both intra-elite disputes and British geopolitical pressure effectively changing social property relations, especially regarding land and labour.

That being the case, the arguments presented here do not amount to an intervention in the “transition debate” (Hilton et al., 2004; Sweezy and Dobb, 1950), as I do not offer here an alternative account of the rise of capitalism as a “mode of production”. Rather, I rely on the account provided by Political Marxism (Brenner, 1977, 1985a, 1985b, 2003, Wood, 1996, 2002b, 2002a), which implies a particular notion of what exactly is understood by “mode of production” (captured by his category of “social property relations”), and how capitalism in particular came into being. In that context, speaking of a “Brazilian transition” does not imply a different “origin” of capitalism in Brazil, but refers to the geopolitical process through which capitalism engulfs the Brazilian society in the British “informal empire”. Following Wood, at that point “[n]o entry into the capitalist economy could (...) be the same as the earlier ones, as they all became subject to a larger and increasingly international capitalist system.” (Wood, 2002a, p. 73). One of my goals in this chapter (and in this research as a whole) is to trace the specificities of how Brazil became a part of that international capitalist system.

¹⁰¹ I am not analysing here the processes of foreign policy formation within the British state. The process through which it becomes a parliamentary rather than royal prerogative is well described by Teschke (2009), and the parliamentary disputes regarding the transatlantic slave trade is documented by Blackburn (1988)

¹⁰² This is also different from the assumption present in the Communist Manifesto of British capital creating “a world after its own image” (Marx and Engels, 1969, p. 16). There is no conscious plan of replicating capitalism abroad, but a geopolitics that ensures the possibility of the practices of reproduction of the British elite (represented in parliament) by ensuring British political pre-eminence in Brazil, as evidenced by Canning’s claim that “Spanish America is free, and if we do not mismanage our affairs sadly she is English” (Temperley, 1923, p. 74). The changes produced in Brazil are product of the unintended outcomes of the clashes between these British practices and those from the Brazilian actors themselves.

It is important to highlight that the use of the word “geopolitical” above (and throughout this work) does not denote a separate ontological sphere of social reality, but a product of a historical process in which social practices and institutions produce particular kinds of spatialisation and different forms of territorial sovereignty and inter-sovereign interactions. Therefore, we cannot speak of a dialectic relation between the “social/domestic” and the “geopolitical/international”. “The geopolitical” has no concrete standing that is independent from social practices of territoriality (or foreign policy). If geopolitics is understood as social practice, it consequently requires a notion of agency equally grounded in social practice (*praxis*), which not only operates both at the “domestic” and “international/global” levels, but also constantly shapes their very separation. This social agency, encompassing practices of foreign policy, is understood through the analytical category of the “social class”. Class is conceived here – in a convergence between Wood’s (1995) reading of Thompson (and a particular tradition within Political Marxist literature) and the “philosophy of praxis” tradition (Bernstein, 1971; Feenberg, 2014; Vasquez, 2003) – as a social relation defined by practices of self-reproduction that are shared within a group and defined in opposition to those of another group¹⁰³: “The separate individuals form a class only insofar as they have to carry on a common battle against another class” (Marx and Engels, 1968, p. 34). It is in this sense that I use in the title the expression “making of a new ruling class”: this work focuses on the historical process through which a portion of the landowners in Brazil found different strategies to secure their reproduction in regard to land property, capital accumulation and surplus extraction; by the end of the 19th century this new social class diverged from (and eventually openly confronted) that more traditional landed oligarchy that dominated Brazil in the first half of the 19th century. The main narrative offered here is that of how the rise of this new ruling class centred in the São Paulo province and their struggle with the more traditional landowners in Rio de Janeiro and in the Northeast eventually brought down the House of Braganza and gave birth to the Republic in 1889.

¹⁰³ It is important to highlight the extension of this theoretical argument. This is not only an intra-Marxist debate about notions such as “mode of production” and “class”. The rejection of “the international” as an ontologically distinct sphere of human activity and its grounding in social practices implies a reinterpretation of Historical Materialism that inscribes it in the roots of Historical Sociology. In doing so, it challenges other paradigms of that area, especially those who rely on that distinction or vaguely refer to social “factors” without accounting for social agency (Navari, 2000; Reus-Smit, 2013; Schulz, 2014).

This narrative consists, firstly, of the increasing relevance of coffee for Brazilian exports throughout the 19th century, and its final consolidation as the main commodity in Brazilian economy. The preference for coffee, especially against sugar and cotton, in Brazilian production has to be understood from a perspective that accounts for its geopolitical connections. Not only in terms of trade and coffee's continuously growing markets in the U.S. and Europe, but also of the influx of capital being invested both in coffee production itself, and in activities related to it, such as banking and railways. Industry became a popular investment for accumulated capital, but remained always subordinate to the interests of coffee planters, who controlled the economic policies of the Empire. Therefore, the ascension of coffee planters as a new ruling class in Brazil is related to the growing presence of financial capital in the Brazilian economy, which was the result of the articulation between the interests of Brazilian landowners and foreign capital¹⁰⁴. As a result, this new Brazilian ruling class was much more intimately connected to international capital than its more traditional counterpart¹⁰⁵.

Secondly, this work turns to one of the most significant changes that the rise of coffee brings to social-property relations in Brazil. The geographical expansion of coffee plantations to the western hinterlands happened under an impulse of this landowning elite towards the accumulation of land property, which since 1822 with the end of the *sesmarias* regime was no longer regulated by the necessity of concessions by the crown. The need to regulate property rights and land ownership prompted the creation of the Land Law in 1850. In the parliamentary sessions that led to the adoption of this law, the opposition of coffee planters from the southeast and the traditional landowning oligarchies from the northeast (mostly involved in sugar production) was already noticeable. As an outcome of the victory of the new elite of

¹⁰⁴ It is important to highlight that, although the growth of coffee plantations throughout the 19th century can be seen as a "market imperative" due to the fluctuation in commodity prices, it is definitely not a capitalist market imperative that leads producers to compete to lower production costs. Similar shifts from one commodity to another because of market conditions had happened before in Brazil in the previous centuries, and in all of them the landowners reacted by specialising in something else (that is, by finding better market opportunities) rather than making changes in the production process. This is a crucial distinction in order to determine what is precisely the kind of market dependence that characterises capitalist social property relations, as argued by Ellen Wood (Wood, 2002b). In the particular case of coffee production in Brazil, the form of market dependence associated with capitalist competition will not appear before the end of the 19th century, as the sheer scale of production allows Brazilian planters to control the global coffee market: by 1850 half of the world's coffee was grown in Brazil, and that number increased to 80% in 1906 (Topik and Samper, 2006)

¹⁰⁵ For a geographical division between the coffee planters in the *oeste paulista* and the *vale do Paraíba*, see Map 3 in the Annex.

coffee planters, the law fully commodified the rights over land in Brazil, and at the same time protected landowners against the possibility of accumulation of land property by members of the lower classes.

The legal reforms that implied significant changes in social property relations did not affect only land property, but also labour. Also in 1850 the transatlantic slave trade was terminated, as a result of decades of diplomatic pressure by Britain. This means that this new coffee elite was rising in a context in which access to slave labour was increasingly difficult. They were able to circumvent it through the internal slave trade, while this was possible. But the growth of the abolitionist movement eventually forced them to find alternatives, such as incentives to European immigration. The eventual success of the latter and the increased slave resistance during the 1880s resulted in winning the support of *oeste paulista* coffee planters to the abolition, and increased their dissatisfaction with the monarchy.

Ultimately, the growth of the abolitionist movement and the rise of several radical manifestos from within the Liberal Party in the 1870s must be taken as the context in which the Republican Party is created, having the Paulista coffee planters as its main supporters. The intense political crisis of the 1880s, mostly caused by the difficulty to reach a parliamentary agreement around the abolition of slavery, forms the conditions for the radicalization of the Republican faction, in which the idea of instigating a military coup grows across this period. The abolition, finally achieved in 1888, is not enough to prevent the Republicans and the military to proceed with their coup. The Republic was proclaimed in 15 November 1889 under the command of Marshall Deodoro da Fonseca, with the support of Brazil's new coffee-based ruling class.

Of course, it is important to keep in mind that the affirmation of this new class of landowners took place in the aftermath of the consolidation of Brazil's territorial sovereignty under the House of Braganza. Its main source of political support came from the traditional landowning oligarchy, which constantly struggled for political control against the Portuguese imperial aristocracy (at the time when D. João moved the court to Rio, in 1808) or against what remained from it after the independence in 1821 (and up until the abdication of Pedro I in 1831). Throughout this period, large-scale export agriculture remained the pillar of Brazilian economic activity. The rise of coffee around the Paraíba Valley was already noticeable at that period. However, the

impact of the coffee hegemony was only felt at its fullest once the centre of production moves west. And it is to this process that the paper now turns.

The Rise of the Coffee Sector and its Connection to Foreign Capital

The first coffee plantations in Brazil date back to the 18th century. However, coffee rises to the position of the main Brazilian export commodity in the 19th century, when it grows continuously to the point of representing alone more than 70 per cent of total outputs (Prado Jr., 2012, p. 167). This continuous growth of coffee's portion among the export surplus is only briefly halted by the rapid growth in cotton production during the Civil War in the United States. This escalation of coffee's importance for Brazilian exports is shown below in tables 1 and 2.

Table 1 – Value of the Major Brazilian Exports in Relation to Total Exports, 1821-1850 (%)

	Sugar (I)	Cotton (II)	Coffee (III)	(I)+(II)+(III)	Hides (IV)	Others ¹⁰⁶
1821-30	30.1	20.6	18.4	69.1	13.6	17.3
1831-40	24.0	10.8	43.8	78.6	7.9	13.5
1841-50	26.7	7.5	41.4	75.6	8.5	15.9

(Bethell and De Carvalho, 1989, p. 86)

In the decade of 1831-40, when it first became the most important commodity in Brazil, production was driven by the popularization of a “café culture” in continental Europe (tea remained the most popular option in Britain, and it could rely on its own colonies for its coffee imports), and especially in the United States (the largest single market), which by the early 19th century, looked for trade partners who were free from British domination. At this point 80 per cent of Brazilian coffee production was centred on the valley of the Paraíba river – in the southern portion of the Rio de Janeiro province, but also covering parts of the neighbouring provinces of São Paulo and Minas Gerais. As this coincided with the consolidation of the centralised power of the

¹⁰⁶ Tobacco, cacao, rubber, mate, etc.

Brazilian Empire in Rio de Janeiro¹⁰⁷, this represented a geographical dislocation of Brazilian political geography of production, as the main source of agricultural production was now in the southeast, rather than in the northeast. The importance of Rio de Janeiro as the main commercial port and urban centre, on the rise since the mining cycle of the 18th century, kept growing. However, during the 1830-40 decade, the social significance of this change was limited. The coffee plantations in the Paraíba valley still relied heavily on slave labour, and were still limited to a coastal region, occupied by Portuguese settlers for a long time (Bethell and De Carvalho, 1989, pp. 85–6; Prado Jr., 2012, pp. 159–161).

Table 2 – Major Exports of Brazil (by decade), 1841-80 (Values in £1000)

Product	1841-50		1851-60		1861-70		1871-80	
	Value	%	Value	%	Value	%	Value	%
Coffee	22,655	46.99	49,741	53.67	68,004	50.38	112,954	59.49
Sugar	14,576	30.23	21,638	23.35	18,308	13.56	23,540	12.40
Cotton	4,103	8.51	6,350	6.85	27,293	20.22	19,070	10.04
Hides	4,679	9.70	7,368	7.95	8,958	6.64	11,106	5.85
Tobacco	974	2.02	2,679	2.89	4,567	3.38	6,870	3.61
Rubber	214	0.44	2,282	2.46	4,649	3.44	10,957	5.77
Cacao	537	1.11	1,033	1.11	1,388	1.03	2,438	1.28
Maté	477	0.99	1,583	1.71	1,817	1.35	2,945	1.55
Total	48,215	99.99	92,674	99.99	134,984	100	189,880	99.99

(Graham, 1989, p. 115)

By the late 1840s Brazil was by far the world's largest coffee producer, representing over half of the global production (Bethell and De Carvalho, 1989, p. 85). By the 1850s, it was already displacing sugar plantations to the west of the city of São Paulo, where more gentle hills and climate and the more fertile soil generated the conditions for another hike in production: over 640 thousand tons of coffee were exported in the 1830s, and nearly three times that in the 1850s (Graham, 1989, p. 116). The magnitude of this continued growth and its geographical expansion towards the west brought a number of significant changes in Brazilian society, culminating in the

¹⁰⁷ As seen in Chapter 4.

rise of a new ruling class in Brazil. Especially from 1850 onwards, it deeply impacted the rise of a new form of land property, and the transition from slavery to free labour. These issues, related to the particular form taken by this western expansion, will be further discussed below. This section will discuss the specificities of coffee plantations that connect it more closely to international cycles of capital accumulation¹⁰⁸.

As it was usual for the other commodities produced in Brazil, there was a class of merchant intermediaries connecting the producers to their international consumer markets. British and American companies predominated not only in the coffee trade in Rio de Janeiro and Santos, but also in that of sugar in Recife and Salvador. These traders would charge a percentage of the sale as their fee, but would often also offer a variety of other services, including storage, delivery of slaves, and especially credit. As the coffee plant takes years of growth before the first harvest, long term loans (sometimes converted into mortgages) were important for the rapid expansion of coffee plantations in the 1840s. The financialisation of these traders, or factors, benefited from the prohibition of the slave trade, since not only the amount of investments employed in that trade needed a different output after 1850, but the improved relations with Britain (who had pressed for the abolition of slavery since the independence) facilitated the participation of its investors in Brazil (Graham, 1989, pp. 130–1; Prado Jr., 2012, pp. 161, 168–9, 192).

Particularly in the second half of 19th century the continuous growth of coffee exports (and its rising prices) permitted an unprecedented accumulation of capital. It stimulated the financialisation of the Brazilian economy with the development of its first private banks and companies in partnership with British capital, and even generated a first impulse towards industrialisation. However, this industrialisation of

¹⁰⁸ In terms of having a direct connection to capitalist cycles of accumulation, it could be argued that cotton production was equally or more integrated to those as that of coffee, since it relates directly to the process of industrialization in Britain in the 18th and 19th centuries. However, in response, coffee was the only crop around which social relations were transformed by its connection to the (previously and internationally established) cycles of capital accumulation, since its production kept increasing rapidly after the prohibition of slave trade. Cotton, unlike coffee or sugar, was predominantly produced in Brazil by smaller producers, with less access to capital (*i.e.*, royal land concessions or slave labour). Its production depended a lot more on price oscillations, its two main moments of popularity coinciding with the two moments in which British industry could not count with its main cotton resource, the south of the United States: their war of independence in late 18th century, and their civil war in mid-19th century. Sugar planters, on the other hand, were so deeply dependent on slaveholding that they failed to adopt new techniques: in 1860, 70 per cent of Cuban sugar mills operated with steam power, while only 1 per cent of those in Pernambuco did so (Graham, 1989, pp. 114, 116–7).

the 1860s was very limited, precisely because of its dependence on the interests of coffee planters and international capital:

“Despite a steady rise of imports, Brazil had a considerable surplus on its balance of trade after 1861. But profit remittance, mainly to British companies which invested heavily in the most profitable sectors of the economy, interest payments on repeated British loans to finance government expenditure which tended to rise more rapidly than government revenue (...), and manipulation of the rate of exchange by the British all limited local capital accumulation. Moreover, capital tended to accumulate in the hands of coffee planters and merchants connected with exports and imports.” (Viotti da Costa, 1989, p. 165)

At the intersection between the interests of coffee planters and foreign capital, it is crucial to look at the economic policy of the Empire in mid-19th century. The period between the 1850s and 60s became known as the “Conciliation”, precisely because of the relative consensus among the elites (especially in contrast with the 1830s and 40s), with Liberals and Conservatives forming cabinets¹⁰⁹ together. This consensus, however, was only possible due to the definitive centralization of power around Rio de Janeiro, instead of concessions of greater autonomy to the provinces¹¹⁰. The conservative cabinet named in 1848 – given full support by the elections in 1849 in which only one member of the Liberal party had a seat in parliament – was an important turning point. Its most important members were all connected (either directly or through marriage) to slave-holding coffee planters in the Rio de Janeiro province. Taking advantage from its control of parliament and cabinet, the Conservative party implemented important reforms¹¹¹ which “completed the process of centralizing authority in a government now firmly managed by the coffee planters of Rio de Janeiro” (Graham, 1989, p. 146).

One of the elements of this consensus was the trade policy, which was suspended in an equilibrium between the landowners’ desire for free trade and the import tax as the main source of state income. After 1844, Brazilian trade policy was no longer constrained by the British treaty of 1827, thus allowing tariffs (especially on

¹⁰⁹ The cabinet of ministers was entirely named by the prime minister, who was chosen and dismissed at the Emperor’s will. The parliament was composed by a chamber of deputies elected by the indirect vote of each province every four years, and a senate with members appointed by the Emperor for life (Graham, 1989, pp. 138–9).

¹¹⁰ This debate between a centralization of political power in Rio de Janeiro and its institutions (the cabinet of ministers, parliament, and the emperor) and a decentralization and greater provincial autonomy was the main point of opposition between, respectively, the Conservative and the Liberal parties in the 1830s and 1840s.

¹¹¹ Beside the already mentioned land law, and the prohibition of transatlantic slave trade, they were also responsible for a commercial code which promoted important changes in Brazilian legal system in order to make it more familiar to international business. It also reformed the National Guard eliminating the election of its officers, now named directly by the national government (Graham, 1989, p. 146).

textiles) to be raised. The protectionist effect of these tariffs were only mild. They were aimed at generating revenue for the Crown rather than fostering the industrialisation of the domestic economy. Between 1850 and 1870, half of Brazilian imports came from Britain, and, within those, seventy per cent were textiles, and other fifteen per cent consumer goods¹¹². Therefore, imposing a high import tariff would contradict the interests of the landowners, as it would limit their access to industrialised goods and affect their consumption habits. In times of need (such as in the Paraguayan War), foreign debt was still the preferred way of funding state expenses. Normally, import tax would still be the main source of public income (constituting 60 per cent of it in the third quarter of the 19th century)(Graham, 1989, pp. 132–3). In a revealing passage that shows the influence of Ricardian comparative advantages among Brazilian policymakers, Graham narrates:

“(...) the minister of finance in the new conservative administration which took office in 1848, Joaquim José Rodrigues Torres, the future Visconde de Itaboraí (1802-72), himself a coffee planter, named a commission to study and revise the tariff. The report, published in 1853, enthusiastically urged the virtues of free trade. Citing a host of authorities, mostly British, *its authors displayed a strong commitment to the principle that governments should not restrict international trade. Brazil should concentrate, they said, on what it did best: growing coffee*. Nevertheless, the need for governmental revenue slowed steps toward free trade until the tariff of 1857 and the even more liberal tariff of 1860 significantly lowered duties.” (Graham, 1989, p. 133, emphasis added)

Brazilian trade policy in the second half of the 19th century was conducted by an alliance between the landowning class in general (coffee planters from the Paraíba valley in particular) and foreign capital. Even the Emperor, who held absolute power over the choice of the prime minister and could veto any law approved in parliament, would often act against his own inclinations when pressured by his councillors. When compared to his father, Pedro II had a very discrete role in Brazilian political history. During his reign, the oligarchies had a much stronger control over the country (Viotti da Costa, 1989, p. 172). As a result, the economic policy of the state was always dependent on their interests. This was a problem for the development of industrial activity: only a few companies managed to survive until the end of the 19th century, and those who did definitely depended on state patronage¹¹³. An example of this is the

¹¹² The second largest supplier of industrialised goods was the United States (supplanted by France in 1875), with only ten per cent of Brazilian imports (Graham, 1989, p. 132).

¹¹³ The development of industry in Brazil during the 19th century serves as a good example of Gunder Frank's argument that development can only happen in the “satellites” in periods of relative isolation from the “metropolis” (Gunder Frank, 1969b, pp. 10–11). In this case, during a period of approximation between the landowning elites and British financial capital, their aligned interests pose a substantial barrier to industrialisation. However, his explanation for why does this core-periphery relation generate

case of Irineu Evangelista de Souza, the Visconde de Mauá. He made his fame as a prominent investor and industrialist in partnership with Manchester bankers over the 1850s, extending his banking activities over Argentina and Uruguay, and building the first railway in Brazil in 1854. However, he remained dependent on his links with the Crown, and as soon as his interests did not coincide with those of the landed oligarchies he was easily sacrificed. The successive financial crisis in 1860s and 1870s eventually brought him to bankruptcy (Graham, 1989, pp. 134–5; Viotti da Costa, 1989, pp. 177–8).

In fact, these patriarchal relations of patronage through the state were an essential trait of Brazilian society throughout this period of transition to capitalism. Politicians were seen not as representatives, but as benefactors, whose political power depended on their ability to grant favours. The proverb according to which ‘one who does not have a godfather dies a pagan’ applied not only to the success of economic enterprises, but also to the nomination of public (both civil and military) offices, success of political careers, and the appointment of bishops (Viotti da Costa, 1989, pp. 178–9).

Therefore, this alliance between landowners and financial capital that shaped the economic policy of the second empire unfolded within the patriarchal relations of patronage that constituted one of the main limits of Brazilian liberalism. However, the picture formed by these three elements (landowners, financial capital and state) is insufficient to explain the fall of the republic. In order to account for that, it is still necessary to trace the important ruptures within the landowning oligarchy which characterises the new ruling class that overthrows the House of Bragança, rules over the Old Republic, and in doing so plants the seeds of the Brazilian “transition” towards capitalism. The first of these ruptures to significantly alter the social-property relations in Brazil was the commodification of land under the land law of 1850.

underdevelopment (and relative isolation allows for development in the periphery) remains at the level of a theoretical abstraction. To go further, it becomes necessary to reconstruct that relation from an agency-centred perspective, focusing on the disputes around the social property relations that constituted such relationship and generated such outcome.

Trajectory of Reforms in Land Property

During the colonial period, all the land in Brazil was property of the Portuguese Crown, but the right to allocate it to settlers was given to each of the donatary captains. These concessions to the use of land still relied on the late medieval system of *sesmarias*, which dated back to the 14th century. These were not hereditary at first, but became so in mid-16th century due to the need to promote the occupation of the territory by Portuguese settlers (Disney, 2009a, pp. 115–6, 2009b, pp. 211, 243, 256). It is worth noticing that this form of land property was created with the intention of reinforcing the connection between the peasants and the land, limiting their migration towards the urban areas in pre-modern Portugal, but its application in Brazil produced a system of highly fragmented and localised political authority. The main form of securing land property was to apply for such a concession, which was subject to the decision of the crown (through the captains or the general governor). Across the centuries of colonisation, the decision would take into consideration not only the status and social prestige of the applicant, but also their individual access to “resources to exploit and fortify it” (as per the instructions given to the first vice-king of Brazil, Tomé de Souza, in 1548). The apparent contradiction between the facts that there was no private property over land, but, at the same time, the crown would only grant its concession (in the legal form of the *sesmaria*) for those with access to capital fuelled the discussions among those who saw a feudal or a capitalist character in Portuguese colonisation (Prado Jr., 2011; Sodré, 2002; Stédile, 2011, pp. 21–2; Viotti da Costa, 2000, p. 80).

The royal norms that instituted and regulated the *sesmaria* system presented clear obstacles to land accumulation. They restricted landowners’ property rights were by subjecting them to parameters of productivity, improvements to the land, and actual occupation, therefore making their claim over the land not absolute, but open to revocation. However, local oligarchies always rejected such conditions, and, through their control of official authorities at a local level, managed to avoid this kind of external control over their property (and political power) throughout the colonial period (Motta, 1998; Smith, 2008; Vergara-Camus, 2012). As a consequence, these landowners constantly resisted the attempts from the centralised government to demarcate the extension of their property, as it would limit their ability to expand over their less powerful and influent neighbours. Accumulation of land took place through

the encroachment of neighbouring land using force and political influence in local authorities (*câmaras*), and through the authority over the peasants and independent producers who occupied it as tenant farmers, whose rights over land would become increasingly fragile. This is what created the network of paternalistic political networks that is ubiquitous in the politics of Brazilian society in the regional level (Smith, 2008, pp. 160–166; Viotti da Costa, 2000, pp. 81–2).

Less than two months before the formal independence in 1822, however, the Brazilian crown abolished the legal institute of the *sesmarias*. Between that and the land law of 1850, there would be no regulation about acquisition of land in Brazil. As coffee plantations were growing very fast during that period, the accumulation of land through dispossession of smaller proprietors (tenant farmers and *agregados*) was widespread. As there was no longer any form of securing land property other than directly occupying it, this was a period in which land grabbing took place in large proportions. If under the *sesmarias* institute (devised in the 14th century to secure small land property and ensure peasant productivity) a small elite of landowners and their *latifúndios* were already controlling most of the land in colonial Brazil, without it, land property would be even more concentrated, on the hands of an even smaller elite. As Smith puts it:

“The old Portuguese land laws concerned with fixating population to the land, ensuring their productivity, expanding its taxing capabilities, and avoiding the concentration of land property in *latifúndios* were, throughout time, superseded by the colonial reality. In all its evolution, the legal institutions in the colony never supported private appropriation of land. Public law established parameters to be observed by local and private interests of the landowning elite. Large proprietors never had enough influence over the Crown to shape the *sesmarias* regiment in their favour. [After the abolishment of the *sesmarias*] the State would be silent about property regulations, until the land law was approved in 1850. This period corresponds to the greatest accumulation of land in Brazil and the effective structuration of the *latifúndio* based on local powers, in a situation where the State stays practically absent.” (Smith, 2008, pp. 165–6)

In this context of intense disputes over property rights, often involving violent dispossession, a legal reform to create a new statute of land property began to be discussed in parliament in 1842 (Viotti da Costa, 2000, p. 82).

The debate around this land reform revealed an important rupture within those represented in parliament, that is, mostly the landowning elites. Besides regulating the property over land acquired through occupation and dispossession over the previous years, the supporters of the reform also spoke of the various benefits that private property over land could bring to the Brazilian society as a whole. One common

concern was the need to discipline production and encourage productivity. This was aimed at members of the landowning elites who used their grants merely for social status, rather than cultivating the land, and also at “bad” tenants. Also, and crucially, the land reform was presented as a way of disciplining labour power, granting a path towards free labour. It was argued by the supporters of the law that the money obtained with the sale of public lands could be used to foster European immigration (Viotti da Costa, 2000, pp. 83–4).

The proposal for commodification of land was seen as a direct attack on slavery. For this reason, the landowners who still depended heavily on the latter, opposed the former. They feared that the possibility of buying public land could lead to a scenario where tenant farmers could have access to their own property, disrupting their networks of patronage. However, the proponents of the law were particularly concerned with making access to land property more difficult to those without capital by restraining squatting. Land should be sold at a high price, precisely to make it unaffordable to newcomer migrants or freed slaves. Both the proponents and opponents of the land reform shared their concerns about the continuity of the large scale plantations as the backbone of Brazilian economy. In doing so, they accepted E.G. Wakefield’s assumption that, if there is easy access to land, the coercion of slavery would be necessary to make workers remain on plantations (De Carvalho, 1981, p. 40; Smith, 2008, pp. 233–5; Viotti da Costa, 2000, pp. 82–5).

With the Conservative party in undisputed control over parliament after 1849, the proposal was approved almost in its entirety. However, bureaucratic and operational difficulties with the survey of land property were obstacles to the implementation of the law. As a result, it did little more than easing the accumulation of land by coffee planters in the provinces of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Minas Gerais, who were its main proponents. The law failed as a stimulus to immigration: European workers would rather move to the United States, where they could afford to buy small plots of land. For this reason, De Carvalho calls the law a “failed attempt at modernization” (De Carvalho, 1981, pp. 47–9). In general, the issue is summed up in the following passage:

“The parliamentary debates on the law reveal a conflict between traditional and modern conceptions of landownership, a transition from a traditional view of land as the Crown’s domain to a modern view of land as a public domain. In the earlier period land was granted primarily as a reward for services to the Crown; later it became accessible only to those who could exploit it profitably on in other words, those who had capital. Thus land, which had been seen as a grant in itself, came to be a commodity; its ownership, which had

essentially conferred social prestige, came to signify economic power. Changing attitudes toward land corresponded to changing attitudes toward labor: from a commitment to slavery and certain forms of servitude to a commitment to free labor.” (Viotti da Costa, 2000, p. 79)

The land law approved in 1850 which inaugurates private ownership of land (and its commodification) is linked to the expansion of the capitalist social-property relations in Brazil. However, this is not due to its attempt at modernization, or to the very fact that land was commodified. Capitalism cannot be seen simply as a consequence of expansion of markets, or of the commodification of land, or labour. Instead, if it is understood as a particular and historically specific form of social-property relations, its expansion refers to the process through which other forms of social (re)production become not only more intimately connected, but also subjugated to it. In this case, the land reform is clearly motivated by a need to secure irregular property rights over their plantations, through which the landowners’ connection to British capitalism was mediated by commercial and financial means.

Similarly, instead of being seen as an attempt of “modernization” or a “commitment to free labour”, the measures proposed to foster European migration must be held as the response found by a portion of the Brazilian landowning class to British (successful) pressures for the abolition of transatlantic slave trade. Incentives to European migration, as I will argue later in this chapter, gained popularity as a strategy to replace slavery among the landlords of the *oeste paulista* in the aftermath of 1850. In that year, the end of transatlantic slave trade created a high demand for slave labour in the internal market, in which the coffee planters of the Paraíba valley had a clear competitive advantage. Also, despite it being an important part of the Brazilian transition towards capitalism (still in its very early stages at this point), this migrant labour cannot be seen as a seed of capitalist relations in itself. The social property relations that connected these workers to the landlords were far from representing the “dual freedom” mentioned by Marx, or a separation between political and economic means of coercion, as in Brenner (Brenner, 1985a; Marx, 1976, pp. 271–3). This statement will be fully explained in the following section.

Slavery, “Free Labour”, and Republic

The most fundamental element in an analysis of the decline of slavery in Brazil is, of course, the resistance of slaves themselves, which was a constant factor in its

daily operations all around Brazil since the 16th century. Many forms of resistance – collective and individual – appeared, in a variety of forms: from damaging tools to attacking masters and overseers. A common practice was the escape from the plantations and the formation of communities of runaway slaves. In the first few centuries, these communities would be in hidden locations, away from the lands controlled by their former white masters, receiving the common denomination of *quilombos*¹¹⁴. With the growth of cities from the end of the 18th century and the concentration of free black workers in some neighbourhoods, fugitive slaves would also find a safe haven in urban areas (Reis and Gomes, 2016). In the 19th century, especially in the decades of 1860 and 1870, attacks to masters or overseers from small groups of slaves seem to have grown in number in the *oeste paulista* region with an important addition: instead of escaping into *quilombos* these slaves would present themselves to the police, “as if claiming the right to kill their oppressors” (de Azevedo, 1987, p. 180). As a result, these events received more space in reports to provincial presidents and newspapers, contributing to the fear of the white elites from a slave uprising and to the need for an alternative to slave labour.

Most of the historiography of the abolitionist movement in Brazil attributes the fight against slavery to the geopolitics around slave trade that culminated in its prohibition in Brazil in 1850, and to the liberal ideology of anti-slavery societies that appeared in England in the turn of the century, and by its second half were rapidly proliferating in Brazilian society. In some of it, slaves are portrayed as passive and indifferent, participating in abolitionism only when prompted and agitated by these elite movements. This form of depriving slaves from their historical agency, completely obscuring the struggles mentioned in the previous paragraph, was common in late 19th and early twentieth centuries, among the first generation of Brazilian sociologists and historians (Holanda, 2012; Nabuco, 2012). Later, the long history of slave resistance that runs alongside the history of slavery in the Americas itself would be integrated in the account of abolitionism. However, this integration was only partial.

¹¹⁴ The most famous of the Brazilian quilombos was known as Palmares, which was actually an amalgamation of many different communities of fortified villages located in the southern portion of the Pernambuco captaincy (currently in the state of Alagoas), united by a common king. It appeared in the early years of the 17th century and grew with the Dutch-Portuguese war. By the 1690s, at its apogee, it counted with twenty thousand inhabitants. It was finally destroyed by the Portuguese army in 1695. During the 1670s there were attempts for a peace treaty between the Portuguese crown and the Palmares’ leadership of King Ganga-Zumba, which resulted in his assassination by younger Palmaran leaders who continued to fight the Portuguese forces (Klein and Luna, 2010, pp. 196–7).

The rebellious behaviour of slaves was recognised but deprived of political meaning, because of their material condition of isolation in separate plantations. From this perspective, in order to achieve political significance in Brazilian society slave resistance still had in white abolitionism (either through British geopolitics or liberal ideology) a necessary complement¹¹⁵.

As a result, the abolition of slave trade in 1850 and the abolition of slave labour itself in 1888 is often understood from a combination of British geopolitical pressures and the ultimate failure (or structural limits) of colonial slavery itself, while the resistance from (and agency of) slave workers fades to the background. The history of the abolition of slavery becomes a history of the growth of the abolitionist movement within the elites from 1860 onwards, more than a history of slave resistance (Bethell and De Carvalho, 1989; Fernandes, 1969; Klein and Luna, 2010; Prado Jr., 2012; Viotti da Costa, 1989). In my argument, in order to account for the anti-slavery struggle in Brazil as a whole, including its increasing popularity within the urban middle class from the 1860s onwards and its acceptance by a portion of the elite in the 1880s, it is essential to keep in mind that the constant and relentless resistance of the slave population in Brazil is an absolutely necessary precondition for the popularization of the idea within the ruling classes that slavery had “reached its limits” and that finding an alternative was increasingly urgent (Cunha, 1985; de Azevedo, 1987; Reis and Gomes, 2016; Saes, 1990).

In fact, the concerns of the Brazilian elites with the dangers of ruling over a slave society are seen long before the abolition of slave trade. Since the early days of the 19th century, books published by Brazilian intellectuals show a clear concern about “national homogeneity”, triggered by the looming shadow of the recent slave rebellion in St. Domingue, as well as by the series of insurrections by African slaves in the *recôncavo baiano* that culminated in the Malês’ revolt of 1835. It is this feeling that Celia Maria de Azevedo captures in the expression “Black wave, white fear”:

“Facing widespread expectations of inversion of the social and political order and generalised revenge against white people, the educated minority began to register their

¹¹⁵ Although the historians that share this view come from a variety of theoretical affiliations, this limitation of slave agency can be seen as a theoretical inheritance of structural Marxism. In this view, classes are determined directly by the economic structure of a given historical period and their respective consciousnesses reflect these same conditions. As their material condition was one of extreme alienation from the products of labour, slaves were also unable to achieve the stage of class consciousness necessary to act historically. Following this logic, the abolition must be explained through a focus on intra-elite disputes precisely because slaves are incapable to act as a class in their own struggle (de Azevedo, 1987, pp. 176–7).

perception of a country divided by a deep social and racial heterogeneity, divided between a white, rich and propertied minority and a non-white, poor and dispossessed majority.” (de Azevedo, 1987, p. 36)

Throughout the 19th century, the solutions pointed by this educated minority for such problem can be divided in two broad camps: the abolitionist proposal which includes a pedagogical treatment of the poor masses to “remove them from their abject, useless and isolated lives” and bring them into the elites’ “project for a united, harmonious and progressive society”. The second one, from the 1840s onwards, points to immigration of white European workers as the “ideal people to form the future Brazilian nationality” (de Azevedo, 1987, pp. 36–7).

This change is connected to changes in the patterns of slave resistance in the second half of the 19th century, which have been linked to the growth of an abolitionist movement among the urban middle class and free workers. Acts of slave resistance increase in frequency throughout the century, but the urban middle class and free workers play a crucial role in changing the political scope of slave struggles, and increasing their effectivity.

In the preceding centuries, the acts of slave rebellion were aimed at, when in a small scale, simply interrupting their condition of subjugation and exploitation. Where slaves managed to establish *quilombos*, entire communities of fugitive slaves, these were organised in a variety of ways, and established an equally varied relations with the surrounding *fazendas* (Saes, 1990, pp. 272–3). Décio Saes argues that, due to the obvious restrictions in the rural slaves’ ability to organise politically beyond the lands in which they lived and worked, their struggle was limited to this local scope, being unable to articulate wider revolutionary ambitions. This is only made possible through the growth of the abolitionist movement of educated free workers that constituted the middle class, especially in the cities¹¹⁶. Through this influence, the role of the *quilombo* was changed significantly. The goal of revolting slaves was no longer to create communities in which they would live in isolation of the rest of Brazilian society for the long term (as was the case for the *quilombos* during the colonial period). Influenced by the larger aims of middle class abolitionism, many of these revolting slaves in the

¹¹⁶ In order to account for the role of middle classes and free workers in the abolitionist movement, Saes seems to incur the kind of structural Marxist position critiqued by de Azevedo: his point can be interpreted as if, only through the intervention of these white and educated free workers were the rural slaves able to reach a “proper revolutionary” (therefore higher) stage of class consciousness (de Azevedo, 1987, pp. 176–7; Saes, 1990, pp. 272–4).

second half of the 19th century aimed instead at being reinserted in the society as a free worker, that is, as a citizen, as a subject of rights.

“This middle class abolitionism was not aiming at the formation of black communities that could bring back a tribal way of life, or to reproduce in smaller scale the relations between masters and slaves. Its strategic goal was (...) bourgeois legal ideology: to ‘free’ all enslaved workers so that members of all social classes – ‘individuals’ – could be equally held as subjects of rights (that is, ‘citizens’). (...) The strategic goal of this middle class abolitionism implied, therefore, to turn slave labour into wage labour in farms, docks, factories, or in commerce; rather than push it out of these economic units. (...) In this new context, characterised by an articulation between the middle class abolitionist movement and revolting slaves, the *quilombo* (isolated black communities) was no longer the *strategic* goal of slave revolts, becoming a *merely tactical goal*.” (Saes, 1990, pp. 277–8)

The transformation in the role of *quilombos* is clear when comparing some of these communities created in the 1880s (such as Jabaquara and Rocinha, both in the São Paulo province) with those of earlier periods. As repression of these communities increased after 1850¹¹⁷, they became smaller, usually abandoning agriculture for nomadism. Those who did not usually had the support of white urban middle classes, and even those were no longer permanent communities, but spaces from which these fugitive slaves could find a place to work in a nearby city or farm for a salary (Queiroz, 1977; Saes, 1990, pp. 278–80).

As a result, these new *quilombos* are no longer simply an expression of slave (*ergo*, black) resistance, but a particular way in which such resistance is articulated by the urban middle classes, adopting their strategic goals of political freedom and formal equality (Queiroz, 1977, pp. 135–44). At the same time, the participation of these middle classes in the abolition also increased its effectiveness: while it took Palmares 65 years to gather its 20 thousand members, Jabaquara, created by a former slave in the city of Santos in 1887, had seen 10 thousand fugitive slaves only in that year (Saes, 1990, p. 283).

For these reasons, it is clear that slave revolts and the action of the middle class sectors involved in the abolitionist movement had a major role in the process of abolishing slavery in Brazil. However, the question (taken up by Saes) of whether we should conceive the *Lei Áurea* (“Golden Law”, which abolished slavery in Brazil in 1888) as a concession of the elites, or as its defeat against the middle classes and slaves, falls beyond the scope of this thesis. As the abolitionist movement did not manage to

¹¹⁷ Until the end of the transatlantic slave trade in 1850, it was more viable (in large scale) to simply buy new slaves than to pursue those who escaped (Saes, 1990, pp. 274–5, 279).

elect their own representatives in the chamber of deputies, nor did it overthrow the institutions of the Brazilian Empire, the agency of the landowning elites in gradually moving towards abolition must be accounted for.

In other words, as the process of state-formation is shaped by the social reproduction of the Brazilian elites, the growing acceptance of the abolition of slavery among them is more relevant to understand the evolution of state institutions than the growth of the abolitionist movement per se. The remainder of this chapter is focused on the intra-ruling class competition that revolved around the problem of the regime of rural labour, imposed by the crescendo of slave resistance and abolitionism. Therefore, even though the agency of slaves and middle classes (that is, class struggle “from below”) constitutes, as mentioned above, a necessary precondition for the growth of abolitionism among the ruling classes, this section is not about how the former brought slavery to an end. Instead, its aim is to understand how the intensification of the struggle between slaves and masters shaped the intra-elite disputes (that is, “horizontal” class struggle) for control over the state itself, its prerogatives of policy-making, and the very definition of “national interest”.

For that reason, having avoided the accusations that would normally follow such a move¹¹⁸, we now turn to the period between the prohibition of slave trade prompted by British geopolitical pressures that culminated in the Paranaguá incident in 1850¹¹⁹, and 1888, when slavery was finally abolished in Brazil. The main argument is that the continued acts of slave resistance prompted the elites to look for alternatives to slave labour, such as immigration and abolitionism, dramatically activating a conflict within the traditional oligarchy. The landowners from more traditional sugar plantation areas in the northeast, because of their relative decline, sold their slaves to the coffee plantations in the south, and were the first ones to abandon slavery. However, abolition only becomes a possibility within the chamber of deputies by mid-

¹¹⁸ In this case, the focus on intra-elite class struggle comes from the framing of my object of study, rather than from the idea that slaves are deprived of socio-historical agency, as is the case for a structuralist-influenced historiography (de Azevedo, 1987, pp. 176–7).

¹¹⁹ After decades of diplomatic pressure, the British Navy was patrolling the South Atlantic to intercept ships carrying slaves to the Americas, and in 1850 started doing so within Brazilian territorial waters. After a few weeks, the Fort of Paranaguá (at the time in the southern portion of the São Paulo province, becoming a part of the Paraná province created in 1853) fired against the *HMS Cormorant* when it blocked a few ships in the port. The fear that Britain could respond by escalating the conflict led the parliament to quickly approve the law prohibiting international slave trade in 1850.

1880s, when the coffee planters from the western portion of the São Paulo province (the *oeste paulista*) decide to support the transition to free labour.

The End of Transatlantic Slave Trade

Despite the disputes between liberals and conservatives about the political organisation of Brazil, both seemed to reach an agreement about the terms in which Brazil should be engaging with Britain on the geopolitical level. Both parties shared an enormous discontent with the two treaties signed in the aftermath of the recognition: the 1826 anti-slave trade treaty, and the Anglo-Brazilian commercial treaty of 1827. The latter was seen as a strong constraint on customs, the main source of state revenue. The fact that the low tariffs were not reciprocal and Brazilian commodities faced high tariffs in British markets¹²⁰ was an additional source of discontent. After an unsuccessful attempt to modify the terms of the treaty in 1836, both countries engaged in negotiations around its renovation in 1842¹²¹. On the British side, there were more demands on restricting slavery. On the Brazilian one, there were requests for tariffs at similar levels as those charged from imports from British colonies. Without progress, negotiations eventually broke down and the treaty terminated in 1844. After that, Brazil began a period of protectionist tariffs (Bethell and De Carvalho, 1989, pp. 90–3).

Regarding the issue of slave trade, as a vast majority of the Brazilian elite saw its abolition as a threat to their economic activity, Brazil strongly opposed British pressures for putting the 1826 treaty into effect, even after prohibition of slave trade was reinforced by a national law in 1831. Law enforcement, after the liberal reforms of 1834, was a role of the National Guard, which was controlled by the local elite of each province, who were in its vast majority formed by landowners who supported the revival of the slave trade, even if illegally. As a result of the lack of enforcement and increased demand from the growth of coffee, the slave trade eventually grew past its pre-prohibition years, as seen in table III below.

¹²⁰ This also evidences not only the existence of unequal terms of trade between Brazil and Britain, but their enforcement through British protectionist trade policy.

¹²¹ However, as British merchants felt they had already established a comfortable position in Brazil, they deemed the preferential tariffs as unnecessary: British economic superiority was considered enough to maintain their pre-eminence in Brazil (Bethell and De Carvalho, 1989, p. 92).

Table III – Slave Imports into Brazil, 1831-1855

Year	Slaves	Year	Slaves	Year	Slaves	Year	Slaves	Year	Slaves
1831	138	1836	4,966	1841	13,804	1846	50,324	1851	3,287
1832	116	1837	35,209	1842	17,435	1847	56,172	1852	800
1833	1,233	1838	40,256	1843	19,095	1848	60,000	1853	-
1834	749	1839	42,182	1844	22,849	1849	54,061	1854	-
1835	745	1840	20,796	1845	19,453	1850	22,856	1855	90

(Bethell, 1970, pp. 388–95).

By the late 1830s, the question of slave trade became a constant source of tension between Brazil and Britain, particularly in the form of disputes around the right claimed by the British navy of boarding, inspecting and if necessary seizing Brazilian ships in open seas. In 1845, the British Parliament unilaterally authorized the royal navy to treat Brazilian slave ships as pirate vessels. Following that act and intensified patrolling of the Brazilian coast by the South American Squadron of the British navy, the steadily increasing number of captured slaver ships began making the trade impracticable. In 1850, British ships began taking their anti-slave operations into Brazilian territorial waters, which quickly culminated in an exchange of shots between HMS *Cormorant* and the fort of Paranaguá. Fearing retaliation, the Brazilian government (firmly controlled by the Conservative party at that point) introduced a more effective legislation three months later (Bethell and De Carvalho, 1989, pp. 94–108). The Atlantic slave trade was effectively terminated after 1850, as shown in Table III above. This measure has great impact in the growing coffee plantations of the period, and is a relevant cause for its differentiation from the more traditional landed oligarchies, as discussed below.

The Alternatives to Slave Labour and the Responses to Abolitionism

After the end of international slave trade, the increasing demand of labour in the rapidly growing coffee regions was met through the increasing internal slave trade. This generated a shift in the regional concentration of slaves, from the older sugar plantations in the northeast to the coffee plantations in the Paraíba valley. Between 1864 and 1874 the slave population in the northeast fell from 45 to 28 per cent of the

Brazilian total, while the coffee regions went from 43 to 56 per cent of the total of slaves in the same period. (Graham, 1989, p. 124). As a result:

“Landowners in the north-east became steadily less wedded to the institution of slavery as they sold off their bondsmen and turned increasingly to free, though dependent, labour. Meanwhile, by the late 1860s, (...) wealthy coffee *fazendeiros* (...) clearly saw that unless a new labour system were adopted, their hopes for the future would be frustrated. Finally, although the salt-meat factories in southern Brazil used slaves, the region as a whole and especially the cattlemen were not particularly tied to slavery. In the province of Rio de Janeiro, however, as well as in the older section of São Paulo province along the upper reaches of the Paraíba and in parts of the province of Minas Gerais there was still a firm commitment to slavery and a determination to see it continue as the dominant labour system in Brazil.” (Graham, 1989, p. 125)

This coincided with the regional division between the Conservative and the Liberal parties: the former being stronger in the area surrounding Rio de Janeiro, the capital of the Empire and by the 1850s still the most important coffee region. The Liberals were predominant in other regions, such as the northeast and south. Their social composition, however, was not much different: about half of each was composed by the landowning oligarchy (*fazendeiros*, or *latifundiários*), while the other consisted of urban residents. In the case of the Liberal party, however, these tended to be “professionals” (*i.e.*, lawyers, merchants, engineers, etc.) while bureaucrats were predominantly in the Conservative party¹²². Both were divided in moderate and radical factions, with the moderate representing the traditional agrarian elites and the radicals speaking for the new emerging ruling class (Bethell and De Carvalho, 1989, pp. 58–61; Viotti da Costa, 1989, pp. 197–8).

During the 1850s and 60s many laws proposing gradual emancipation were presented by the Liberal party to the Chamber of Deputies, but all were rejected by the Conservatives. During the 1860s, a number of events favoured the abolitionist cause: the Civil War in the United States, the difficulty of enlisting soldiers for the Paraguayan War (1864-1870)¹²³, a public statement from the emperor Pedro II speaking in favour of gradual abolition. If during the 1850s the Conservatives were able to form a “conciliation” with the moderate wing of the Liberal party, in the 1860s this arrangement was falling apart. This was in great deal due to the anti-slavery issues,

¹²² This is related to the fact that the Conservatives were in power, and therefore in control of appointing offices, for much longer than the Liberals. Both parties had little interest in creating a bureaucratic civil service because of their own networks of patronage (Viotti da Costa, 1989, p. 178; 197)

¹²³ With difficulty to recruit troops, the Brazilian army had to send slaves into war, with the promise of emancipation for those who survived. Also, in some regions free men resisted enlisting for fear of the possibility of a slave rebellion in their absence. Having been mocked by enemies and allies alike for the presence of slaves among its ranks, parts of the army would then defend the abolition of slavery (Prado Jr., 2012, p. 178).

but not only: the Liberal party was also starting to voice their dissatisfaction with political and electoral system, and calling for reforms. From 1860 onwards the parliament would be taken by reformism, culminating in the overthrow of monarchy (Graham, 1989, pp. 147–9; Viotti da Costa, 1989, p. 172).

The Conservative party became once again dominant in parliament, and dissatisfaction with the political structure grew among Liberals. Three manifestos were published between 1864 and 1870 demanding reforms with increasing level of radicalism. The first (1864), written by a group of Conservatives who decided to join the Liberal party instead was the more moderate of the three¹²⁴. The second (1869) was written right after the Emperor dismissed a brief Liberal cabinet, calling a Conservative one instead. For this reason, it was a much stronger critique of the Brazilian political system, demanding (among other things) a reform of the electoral system and the gradual abolition of slavery. The third (1870), a reaction from more radical elements to that second one, demanded also the end of the Moderator Power (*i.e.*, the emperor's right to rule over any decision made by other political institution), and eventually inspired the creation of the Republican Party in the same year (Prado Jr., 2012, pp. 173–4; Viotti da Costa, 1989, pp. 187–190). It can be said that the three had the same goals in general: but differed in their radicalism. They aimed to, in different degrees, limit the power of the traditional elites and their control over the state, which included a greater degree of provincial autonomy and the freedom of private sector from the networks of patronage (that is, from the state itself) (Viotti da Costa, 1989, p. 188).

In this scenario of constant pressure, the Conservative party could not avoid debating a reform of slavery in parliament. In 1871, the Conservative cabinet led by Visconde do Rio Branco proposed the emancipation of new-born children of slave mothers, which was approved (“Free Birth Law”) in 1873. In that vote, regional

¹²⁴ This evidences that the motivation for reform was growing within the ranks of the Conservative party too, with a crucial difference regarding the degree of their radicalism (Viotti da Costa, 1989, p. 188). Indeed, some historians insist that tracking the crisis through the two parties is misleading, as they did not represent different ideologically defined movements, or disciplined electorates, and their political ties were more influenced by personal relations of patronage (Graham, 1989, p. 145; Viotti da Costa, 1989, pp. 197–8). However, it appears contradictory that those same historians track the progress of abolitionism through its influence among the more radical wing of the Liberal party and the political crisis of the 1880s through the disputes between Liberals and Conservatives. Even if they are both constituted by the same ruling elite, by assessing their role in the political crisis between 1830 and the 1880s it becomes clear that the tension between them is a crucial element for understanding the institutional evolution of the Brazilian state (Beiguelman, 1997).

interests were more distinct than party membership, with the coffee regions voting against it *en masse*. Its approval silenced the abolitionist pressures for another decade, when the issue reached its peak after another period of constant rise in coffee prices and growing demand for labour power¹²⁵. By then, the Free Birth Law represented an important change, it made the number of slaves in Brazil decrease even more rapidly than before.

“(...) the slave population fell from 1,566,416 in 1873 to 1,346,097 in 1883, and it continued to decline, to 1,133,228 in 1885 and 723,419 in 1887. The slave population decreased more rapidly in the north-east than in the south, where it tended to concentrate, but even there it declined in relative terms. In São Paulo, slaves represented 28.2 per cent of the total population in 1854, and 8.7 per cent in 1886.” (Viotti da Costa, 1989, p. 199)

The ever-decreasing slave population forced the planters to recognize that an alternative form to deal with their need to increase production was necessary, and the main collective response to that problem came precisely from the coffee planters in the western portion of the São Paulo province: the switch to free labour through incentives to European, especially Italian, immigration. Experiments with European immigrants as replacement to slaves had been attempted since the 1840s, but generated a number of problems, as many of them rebelled due to the poor conditions and coercion from the landowners still used to deal with enslaved workers¹²⁶. With the growing financialisation of coffee production, discussed above, coffee planters became used to diversify their investments (railways, insurance, banking and manufactures were the most popular alternatives) to face periods of decrease in commodity prices. For this reason, slavery became a disadvantage, as it required more “immobilization of capital”. Therefore, between 1875 and 1885, with the financial support of São Paulo’s provincial assembly, 42,000 immigrants, mostly Portuguese and Italian entered the province, and another 114,000 arrived in the next two years. From 1880 onwards, therefore, the coffee planters from São Paulo were quickly reducing their dependence on slave labour. This increasing shift towards “free labour” was reflected on the escalation of the political crisis around the question of abolition (Graham, 1989, pp. 125–6; Viotti da Costa, 1989, p. 199).

¹²⁵ Some would say that, for this reason, the law hindered more than helped the development of the abolitionist movement (Prado Jr., 2012, p. 179).

¹²⁶ For instance, newspapers in the 1850s would feature advertisement of rewards for “runaway settlers” (Graham, 1989, p. 126). Also, according to Caio Prado Jr. (2012, p. 188), the working conditions were so poor that Germany (sic.) prohibited migration to Brazil in 1859.

There is an important distinction between different arrangements to support immigration in Brazil throughout the 19th century, which has an impact on the use of the word “settler” (*colono*) in Brazilian historiography. Dating back to the transition of the Portuguese crown to Rio, there were policies of migration that attracted workers by offering access to small plots of land, in an attempt by the crown to create a class of small property holders while at the same time dealing with the social and racial homogeneity of the country. That is, not only to create a “middle class” between the slave worker and the landowner, but specifically a white one (de Azevedo, 1987; Holanda, 1997; Oberacker Jr., 1997). By the 1840s when Vergueiro tries to stimulate migration as an alternative to the looming crisis of the slavery regime, he creates sharecropping colonies what became known in Brazilian historiography as “partnership settlement” (*colônia de parceria*). In this context, settlers would not be landowners themselves but would be allocated in plots owned by large proprietors, with the obligation of taking care of a given number of coffee plants. They were free to cultivate other things as means or their subsistence, but had to share their crops with the landowners (who would normally place them in locations of lower productivity, reserving the better lands for their own slaves). As these workers would also need to pay back the landowners for the cost of their travel from Europe, their situation was virtually one of debt serfdom (Graham, 1989, p. 126; Viotti da Costa, 1997, pp. 158–161, 2000, pp. 100–112). As these experiences with sharecropping generated too much conflict between the “settlers” and the landowners, that form of migrant work was abandoned in the early 1860s. Non-slave labour in coffee plantations would gradually change into a contract with fixed payment for a given number of coffee plants, with an additional to be paid over increased productivity¹²⁷. The workers would be hired in Brazil, but were still mostly migrants who were already in the country, or migrated through their own means. In 1871 a law approved by the provincial assembly in São Paulo authorised the province to pay for the travel expenses of migrants who came to work in the coffee fields, in what became known as “subsidised migration”. The amount of money made available to bring new workers into the province increased exponentially during the 1880s, and so did the number of workers: between 1871 and 1886 they were just over forty thousand, while in the two following years 122,000

¹²⁷ There was a lot of variety in the forms of contract, some relying exclusively on fixed payments and others relying more on incentives towards productivity (Petrone, 1997, pp. 275–6)

workers arrived in the São Paulo province alone. Having pioneered the transition towards waged labour in Brazilian agriculture, the balance between labour regimes for a large part of this *paulista* elite was reversed in this period: if initially migration was seen as a threat to slavery, it was slavery that was now seen as an obstacle to further incentives to the migration of European workers (Petrone, 1997; Viotti da Costa, 1997, pp. 177–8). This transition is what explains their gradual shift into supporting the abolitionist movement during the 1880s.

Before we proceed into an analysis of the political crisis generated by the discussion of abolitionism in parliament in the last decade of the monarchy, it is important to qualify what is meant by “free labour”. As slavery gradually disappeared from Brazilian plantations and cities, it was replaced by workers who were formally free, in the sense that they were not considered property, they were not owned by their employers. It is in this very broad sense, as a synonym of “non-slave labour”, that Brazilian historiography normally employs the term “free labour”. However, it is very important to keep in mind that this is very far from what Marx called “wage labour”, as that broader meaning does not necessarily imply the “double freedom” of the worker. As he defines in *Capital*, the commodification of labour-power requires workers that are

“(...) free in the double sense that as a free individual he can dispose of his labour-power as his own commodity, and that, on the other hand, he has no other commodity for sale, i.e. he is rid of them, he is free of all the objects needed for the realization [*Verwirklichung*] of his labour-power.” (Marx, 1976, p. 273)

That is, the “double freedom” that Marx associated to capitalist wage-labour in *Capital* is composed, firstly, of an absence any property other than that of each over their own labour-power, that is, objective material dispossession. Secondly, of a freedom from direct coercion in the process of labour. In the Political Marxist tradition, in particular, this means the separation between the “political” and the “economic”, and the mediation of social relations of (re)production through the market (Wood, 2002b, 2002a).

Instead, in 19th-century Brazil, non-slave workers were subjected to the landowners through a network of personal relations. One peculiar character that must be accounted for is the figure of the *agregado*: tenant farmers whose access to housing and a small plot of land for a subsistence crop depended on performing services for

the landlord, and, especially loyalty¹²⁸. For men, this would often mean participation in armed struggle during electoral disputes or during some local rebellion (either making it or putting it down). The relationship involved occasional money payment but its main trait was the landlord's care and favours, in exchange for services and loyalty. The landlord would use a combination of threats or coercion and promised rewards in order to extract surplus, both from slaves and tenant farmers. As a result, the tension between the roles of a paternalist authority and a capitalist entrepreneur (that is, between a "economic" and a "political" relation between the landlord and the direct producers) is not as apparent as a more orthodox or structuralist reading of Marxism would expect¹²⁹ (Graham, 1989, pp. 126–8).

In sum, while non-slave workers were still bound to a region or land through their political ties to particular landowners (their masters), this connection would represent an obstacle to the Brazilian transition towards capitalism. Under those conditions, the workers are still not placed under the imperatives of market-dependency that result of their absolute dispossession, or, in Marx's words shown above, of their freedom from all the objects needed for the realization of their labour-power. It is for this reason that Brazilian capitalism consolidates its first roots in the coffee plantations in the *oeste paulista* where migrant workers had much looser ties to the land, rather than on the northeastern sugar-producing regions which, although dependence on slave labour was already smaller, still relied heavily on the tenant farming figure of the *agregados*.

¹²⁸ In fact, this form of tenant farming was the most common form of non-slave labour in Brazil, accounting for an important share of its subsistence agriculture and cattle ranching (Furtado, 1963; Prado Jr., 2011, 2012).

¹²⁹ Examples of these other possible readings of Marxism include those which accept Marx's teleological sequence of modes of production, and those in which the modes of production are defined in abstract, with the analysis of social relations in a historical context being added *a posteriori*. An example of these can be found in the work of Nelson Werneck Sodré (1979), one of the main pillars of Brazilian Marxism in the first half of the twentieth century. His argument about the colonial period in Brazil portrays it as a combination between "feudal" and "slave-owning" modes of production, which are assumed as abstractions: the property relations he describes between landlords and the Crown are identified as feudal based not on a comparative study with European feudalism but on an abstract notion of the latter, just like there is no comparison between the different relations between a slave and a landowning master in colonial Brazil and ancient Rome (Sodré, 1979, pp. 75–82). In fact, Sodré employs a form of abstract structuralism that seems to anticipate the distinction between a "mode of production" and a "social formation" developed by Althusser (2016) and Poulantzas (1978). Following Wood's (1995) opposition to this structural Marxism, I see the aforementioned patriarchy as a non-capitalist relation because it implies a direct – or "non-economic", in Brenner's (1985a) terms – coercion in the process of production and surplus extraction. However, I reject its classification as feudal, or even as "neofeudal", without a more detailed study of the historical particularity of European feudalism and a comparison with the Brazilian case.

The argument made here is not that this form of free labour does not meet the “criteria” established by an ideal type of what capitalism supposedly is (or should be). Instead, by accepting the Brenner thesis for the origins of capitalism as a specific outcome of class struggle in British agriculture (Brenner, 1977, 1985a, 1985b), “capitalism” is understood through its historical specificity. Therefore, one cannot expect that this set of social-property relations would be repeated in a different historical context. For this reason, when speaking of the “Brazilian transition to capitalism” I do not mean an independent and alternative origin of capitalist social-property relations. Rather, I argue that this historically and geographically specific form of social (re)production goes through a geographical expansion, imposing its market imperatives and jumpstarting changes in the forms of property relations (like the commodification of land and labour) over an ever-increasing portion of the globe. In the case of Brazil, the implementation of this “transition” takes place in a *sui generis* way, through the combined pressures of class struggle “from below” (that is, from the forms of resistance found by slave and non-slave workers) and of geopolitical action of the British empire mediated by the legal form of the European state-system, but still imbued with its capitalist informal imperialism, encompassing its diplomatic pressures towards the abolition of transatlantic slave trade and the action of its financial and merchant capital¹³⁰.

The 1880s and the Final Crisis of the Monarchy

The abolition issue was at the forefront of the political crisis of the 1880s, but it was certainly not its only cause. A decrease in coffee prices affected an already fragile budget, burdened with the railways built in the previous decades and heavily compromised by foreign debt. In 1880 specifically, a popular uprising brought a government down for the first time in Brazil, when the “penny riots”¹³¹ in Rio caused the fall of the Liberal cabinet (Viotti da Costa, 1989, p. 169; 196). Due to the difficulties in reaching a consensus around the economic crisis and a solution to the abolitionist movement, the 1880s saw the greatest political instability of the second

¹³⁰ Due to its processual and relational nature, this “transition” and the institutional form in which it results are *sui generis*. This should not be taken as a rejection of universalism, but as a rejection of generalisation.

¹³¹ Three days of riots and violent repression caused by an increase in public transport fares.

empire, which eventually led to its end. Between 1880 and the end of the monarchy in 1889, ten cabinets were formed and dismissed by Pedro II. In addition, the Chamber was dismissed and re-elected three times (Viotti da Costa, 1989, p. 198).

Since the 1860s slave escapes were becoming more common and getting increased attention from authorities and newspapers. The growth of the abolitionist movement among urban middle classes, and its increasing cooperation with fugitive slaves, generated the notion among the ruling classes that abolition was inevitable. This increased the necessity of landowners to substitute slaves with free workers all around the territory. By 1886, some of the main leaders of the Conservatives in the traditional coffee areas had already changed their positions, accepting the abolition of slavery without compensation for the slaveowners¹³². The abolition was finally approved in 13 May 1888¹³³, with only nine opposing votes (eight of which from Rio de Janeiro – the coffee planters in the Paraíba valley were the only ones who supported slavery until the very end). The result, as with the Free Birth law in 1873 and other political reforms since, had not pleased the Conservatives nor the hopes of the reformers. It did not improve labour conditions in the plantations, as racist and patriarchal relations survived 1888. It most definitely undermined the support for the monarchy: the emperor was criticised by the abolitionists for not having done enough, and by its opponents for having done too much (Viotti da Costa, 1989, pp. 200–3). In sum:

“With abolition came a shift in political power. The collapse of the traditional oligarchies that had held power during the empire and had identified themselves with the monarchy was accelerated. In the following year the monarchy was overthrown and the republic proclaimed. Political power shifted from the sugar cane areas to the new coffee-growing areas. In western São Paulo coffee grown in the *terras roxas* produced harvest never equalled before. A new oligarchy emerged which would rule the country during the first republic (1889-1930).” (Viotti da Costa, 2000, p. 169)

During the political instability of the 1880s the Republican movement grew considerably. It was rising especially among the urban population of larger cities, with one very important exception: in São Paulo, the Republicans had secured the support of the *oeste paulista* coffee planters. However, it is important to highlight that the

¹³² It is important to notice that, unlike in the Paraíba valley, the Paulista oligarchy already accepted the abolition of slavery. However, until this moment they still expected to receive compensation for their lost property (Viotti da Costa, 1997, pp. 182–6)

¹³³ “The law approved in 13 May 1888, called the Golden Law, had only two sentences: *I – Slavery is extinct in Brazil; II – All dispositions to the contrary are revoked*. All that struggle and heroism for these two sentences, so simple and so eloquent, from the reactionary and slaveowning Brazilian empire!” (Prado Jr., 2012, p. 182)

republicanism that was spreading through the urban middle classes was different from the one supported by the coffee elites from São Paulo. While the first was framed as a critique of the power of oligarchies within the state (being against the networks of patronage that ruled appointments for the public service, and against slavery), the latter appeared, from the 1870s onwards, as a solution for the critiques of the coffee sector with the economic policies of the Empire, which, in their view, still gave too much attention to weaker ruling classes (northeast sugar planters in particular) (Saes, 1990, pp. 251, 255). During the period, there was strong overlap between the Republican and Liberal programme, which often hindered the former, as many of its supporters deserted to the latter when it was in power. But it also helped, as it allowed Republican leaders to run for seats in the Chamber of Deputies through the Liberal party in provinces where they were not properly organized (such as in Minas Gerais, where the Republican party was only created in 1888).

In fact, the trajectory of São Paulo's Republican Party (*PRP – Partido Republicano Paulista*) reveal its peculiar support of slavery, not present in the republican movements in other provinces:

“(...) for the ruling classes of the *paulista* coffee region, the *strategic goal* to be conquered was the federation; republicanism was the inevitable consequence of that goal (...). But it is important to remark that, despite this reformism, they were still in favour of slavery. Their republicanism was still pro-slavery. As a different, *abolitionist* republicanism grew among urban middle classes, the São Paulo elites feared the *radicalisation* of the republican movement, preferring instead to commit to the other slaveholding social forces that influenced the imperial economic policy and sustained the unitary and monarchical form of the state.” (Saes, 1990, p. 258, italics in the original)

For the elite in charge of the PRP, therefore, republicanism was a matter of influencing state policy. That is, the decentralisation of Rio's authority over the provinces, it grants this new ruling class more autonomy to set its own economic policy, and more influence over the state as a whole (Saes, 1990, pp. 296–7, 251–7; Viotti da Costa, 1989, pp. 204–12) In this sense, it was a geopolitical move, as it meant an important change in the balance of forces that influenced the policy-making process within Brazil.

It is important to notice that despite the growth of Republicanism in Brazilian cities – that is, among the urban middle class – the overthrow of the monarchy did not come through a popular uprising, but by a military coup. It was made possible through a confluence between two social forces: the *paulista* coffee planters, and the radical military in the capital of the Empire. The former understood its political defeat over the abolition as the evidence that their interests were not strongly represented enough

in the court, or in the chamber of deputies in Rio. After consolidating the option for a coup, they did not have problems in gathering support among the latter, who were exponents of the more radical middle class republicanism after being neglected by Pedro II (and effectively, largely demobilised) after the Paraguayan War (Saes, 1990, pp. 312–7; Viotti da Costa, 1989, pp. 210–1, 1997, p. 186).

Conclusion

Over the second half of the 19th century, the social relations that constituted Brazil went through a significant change. As was the case with the formal independence from Portugal in 1822, the proclamation of the republic in 1889 represented a substantial transformation in the social and geopolitical relations that shaped Brazil's existence as a state. During the 19th century (and especially in its latter half) the joint factors of geopolitical pressures and class struggle result in a transformation of social property relations in Brazil with the commodification of land and labour. If 1822 became a landmark in the larger process of consolidation of Brazilian territorial sovereignty, the second half of the 19th century witness the progressive integration of that polity into capitalist relations of social and geopolitical (re)production. This chapter presented this argument by showing how the coffee planters in the western portion of the São Paulo province – the *oeste paulista* – gradually opposed both the more traditional coffee planters in the southeastern coast (around the Paraíba valley, mostly in the Rio de Janeiro province) and the even older sugar oligarchies from the northeast (mostly in the provinces of Bahia, and Pernambuco). Firstly, through its financialisation: the alliances it made with foreign capital to build banks, railways, and even industries. Secondly, through its role in the legal reforms of the early 1850s, the commodification of land in particular. And thirdly, through its pivotal role in the abolition of slavery and in the rise of the republic – not out of their consciousness of a “historical class role”, or even as the main social force behind these processes, but as institutional changes deemed necessary to safeguard their own interests in their constant struggle against slave resistance that constantly disrupted the “normality” of their own practices of self-reproduction through labour exploitation, as well as to guard their own (geo)political interests against those of other regional elites of the Empire, whose political power became a

clear obstacle to their interests during the 1880s (Saes, 1990, pp. 251–67, 310–7; Viotti da Costa, 1989, p. 213, 1997, pp. 187–8, 2000, pp. 169–171).

Through the narrative provided here it can be understood why Comte's positivist motto "Order and Progress" is inscribed in the Brazilian flag. The changes discussed in the present work and the way each of the actors discussed here implemented (or reacted to) them evidence a deep concern with the possibility of a wide slave rebellion. The white Brazilian elite lived in constant fear of a revolution like the Haitian one since 1791 (Bethell, 1989, p. 10; de Azevedo, 1987; Prado Jr., 2012, p. 181), which was certainly magnified in this period by the wave of revolutions that swept Europe in 1848 (Hobsbawm, 1996). As a result, any change, apart from the most moderate one, was deemed "radical" by the Brazilian deputies, senators and ministers of the period, and repealed under accusations of "communism" (Graham, 1989, p. 145). For this reason, change had to be conceptualized through a framework that privileged social order (in this case, the status quo) more than anything else. Therefore, the idea of equality was dangerous in the sense it is given by the socialists of that time (such as Marx, Engels, Proudhon, Fourier and Saint-Simon). Brazilian scholars and elites felt more comfortable framing their claims for reform through Comte's "respect for social hierarchy and social inequality" and through his certainty that "freedom was a right but equality a myth" (Viotti da Costa, 1989, pp. 185–6). A similar intellectual connection can be found in the way liberalism is used in Brazil, precisely in order to maintain the network of patronage, personalism and hereditary privileges that it was initially devised to oppose (Jahn, 2013; Viotti da Costa, 2000, pp. 54–5).

Finally, if the presence of that positivist "order and progress" in the Brazilian flag can be understood from its 19th century politics, its permanence there to this day reveals a great deal about the evolution of the Brazilian state throughout the twentieth century.

Conclusion: Historical Materialism Against Eurocentrism in IR

The starting point of this research were the theories of IR and IHS that present accounts of the processes of political independence through the formation of sovereign statehood in Latin America and in Brazil. The analysis of their contributions (in Chapter 1) revealed their extensive reliance on theoretical assumptions which are imposed as historical evidence. That is, rather than embarking on profound historical studies of the social and geopolitical contexts in which those processes take place, they make assumptions about those histories that effectively work as *ceteris paribus* clauses: provided that the assumptions from which they begin are valid, they then offer subsequent analyses of how the remaining historical elements operate. The use of theoretical assumptions as *ceteris paribus* clauses by the traditions identified in this thesis can be summarised as follows.

Among those in the English School or Constructivist traditions in IR (Clark, 2017; Dunne and Reus-Smit, 2017; Schulz, 2014), the main assumption is that states exist as a given, and so does a notion of “national interest” tying each of them together. Only on that basis can they explain the rise or operation of an International Society and its normative meaning for each of the particular national identities in their processes of co-constitution.

For those within the World-Systems tradition (Arrighi, 1994; Wallerstein, 1974, 1983, 1989), the main assumption is that the entire world is connected by the capitalist workings of unequal exchange between core and periphery, predicated on the international division of labour of the modern world system. As a consequence, social and geopolitical change must be understood from this broad systemic perspective. As the system has a rigid structure that is divided between a “core” and a “periphery”, one is taken to the realisation that only the history of the former can be called “global”, since the periphery only influences the system through the effects it produces on the core.

The proponents of Uneven and Combined Development (UCD) as the core idea of IHS (Anievas and Matin, 2016; Anievas and Nisancioglu, 2015; Rosenberg, 2016a) work with the assumption of political multiplicity as the starting point of social theory, seen through the lens of the “laws of unevenness and combination”. As a consequence, the international becomes ubiquitous as every society develops both through its own processes and through the impacts of the development of others (that generate “whips

of external necessity” and “privileges of backwardness” in given contexts). History is then used as an illustration that always confirms this pre-established logic.

Those who make use of Neogramscian theory in IR/IHS (Hesketh, 2017; Morton, 2007a) read history as a sequence of social structures, which limits the analytical role of agency by confining it to the moments of transition between two different structural frameworks. The assumption that the notion of “passive revolution” is universally applicable to explain moments of transformation that are not also of open revolutionary rupture limits agency even more, as it provides a theoretical model to explain historical experiences of late modernisation. Once again, history appears as a confirmation of the universal category.

At last, scholars within the group of Decolonial Studies (Mignolo, 2000; Quijano, 2007, 2008) begin from the assumption that the colonial world-system is predicated on colonial difference, and that this difference is the key to explain the system’s inherent coloniality. In doing so, they can offer a solid critique of western epistemology, but not an account of how processes of cultural, social, and geopolitical differentiation take place.

In sum, what all of them have in common are assumptions, in some form, that consist of taking some historical development as given – respectively: the sovereign state, the world-system, political multiplicity, (non-)revolutionary structural transformation, and colonial difference – that is, as the “constant variables” that characterise the *ceteris paribus* clause.

However, history knows no such thing as constant variables. In using this move as a tool for dividing social reality in order to theorise how some of it operates under the assumption that the rest can be taken as a constant given, these theories cannot explain how the particular elements that are assumed come into being themselves, or how can they produce different outcomes in each context. When these supposedly constant elements change, this change is either left unexplained, or simply appears in the narrative as a sudden and unexpected intervention, *deus ex machina*.

In sum, these assumptions are the tools through which historical specificity can be perfectly accommodated (or, in extreme cases, regarded as “exceptions”) within the overarching theories provided. In doing so, there is always an underlying claim that there is no theoretical gain to be had from historical details, since they all can fit the overall models with minor adjustments. That is, the “variables” that are assumed to be constant are either expectations drawn from the historical experiences of Europe, or

assume an explanatory mechanism that minimises the theoretical gains from historical specificity. For instance, the assumptions about the role of sovereign states within an international society or in a modern/colonial world-system are predicated upon the universalisation of the European experience of the rise of modern statehood (even if based on different accounts of such experience). Theories that begin from ontological statements about political multiplicity and colonial difference underestimate historically specific narratives, since these ontological truths appear as the overarching mechanism of historical explanation. The insistence on such assumptions undermines the relevance of non-European histories in analyses of these very same non-European experiences. These theoretical assumptions keep the challenge of Eurocentrism alive in IR/IHS. This reproduces Eurocentric conceptions of general theory by subsuming non-European experiences under their general logics.

To overcome that challenge, the suggestion I present in this research consists essentially of replacing both these *ceteris paribus* assumptions and explanations that rely on the sudden introduction of extraneous elements with a historical analysis that covers the essential elements of a given narrative. This radical historicism is not (and should not be mistaken for) a complete rejection of theory. Instead, it entails a reinterpretation of the role of social theory. Traditionally, theory would supposedly work from those sets of assumptions to *explain* historical processes through the establishment of some kind of repeatable pattern or law. Even when an analysis of historical context is foregrounded, it comes with a structuralist bias that limits the explanatory potential of historical agency¹³⁴. Instead, the radical historicist approach to social science that I suggest here places theory as a methodological guideline for an agency-centred historical analysis. In other words, rather than providing explanation for historical phenomena, theory serves as a framework that guides the investigation of what are the essential components in the making of a given outcome that is selected as the object of study as an open-ended process.

In doing so, this framework privileges two elements in the historical analyses it proposes. Firstly, it privileges the historical role of conflicting agencies – that is, the specific contextualised practices of concrete historical actors – through the notion of class struggle. This is not a rejection of the very existence of structures, but of the idea

¹³⁴ This is the case, for instance, of Cox's notion of critical theory, based upon his "method of historical structures" (Cox, 1981, pp. 135–8)

that the production of any given historical outcome can be logically derived from those. I argue that the role of structures in historical processes cannot be assessed in itself. Instead, it is only revealed through the practices employed by actors in that context. Secondly, it stresses the open-ended character of history. By placing class struggle at its core, this framework brings a sense of historical indeterminacy that should not be washed away by the benefit of hindsight. In other words, it is important to avoid the teleological notion that any given historical outcome is a necessary or inevitable consequence of a particular structural arrangement. In interpreting the social practices present in a context of social conflict, we should avoid the anachronistic behaviour of believing that those actors saw their context in a less indeterminate way than we see ours. The range of possible outcomes of social disputes is just as broad today as it was in the 16th or 19th centuries, even if clearly not the same. The framework suggested here provides the method through which the practices of concrete subjects can be taken into account in their disputes over the indeterminate outcomes that might be produced by the ensemble of their actions.

In Chapter 2 I demonstrated how such a framework can be established by drawing from and building upon a historicist tradition within the Political Marxist literature. By investigating the tensions between historicism and structuralism within PM, I was able to recover the emphasis on contextualised agencies by tracing its historicism back to the Marxian reflections on the philosophy of praxis. If a common social practice of reproduction is what grounds “class” as an analytical category, it follows that class must be understood as a form of subjectivity constantly in the making through the differentiation of experiences and the adoption of new practices throughout history. And, if the goal of a given study is to speak of the territorial aspects of social processes – in this case, the production of a sovereign state as an outcome of social disputes – it also follows that it is essential to conceive of how these practices include (intentionally or not) the production of notions of spatiality. In other words, it is necessary to conceive of social practices of reproduction also as practices of spatialisation. These two elements – the notion of classes as processes and the notion of geopolitics as an ensemble of practices of spatialisation – constitute the core of the PM framework in IR/IHS.

To understand class as process means to take into account the genealogy of forms of subjectivity that are united by a similar experience of the relations of production and exploitation, as well as by the adoption of similar practices to navigate

through those, while resisting the pressures imposed by other actors and imposing pressures on these actors in return. This approach can be traced back to Marx's philosophy of *praxis*, where "class" is the social relation that is established through a common *praxis*. This is further developed by E. P. Thompson (1980), and taken up later by Ellen Wood (1995). In sum, this is taken as a rejection of structuralist notions of class, that are posited as a logical necessity of a given mode of production, or as a social location defined mathematically according to income or any other data. Instead, it is defined by the historical relations through which subjects share an experience of the relations of production and a particular practice or social reproduction. To speak of class in these terms avoids the traditional accusations of economic reductionism. As the notion of *praxis* covers the entire ensemble of human relations, rather than a purely economic sphere (Marx, 1969), it cannot be reduced to matters of property or income. Instead, it entails a notion of forms of subjectivity that are constituted through practices of social reproduction and change according to those. A genealogy of collective social actors entails a history of differentiation between forms of social *praxis*.

In terms of the object of this research in particular, and of IR as a whole, one aspect of such practices of reproduction becomes evident: the way in which they relate to space, constituting different territories and conceptions of space. The idea of practices of spatialisation has its roots in the field of critical geopolitics, and is taken here through its use by PM scholars in IR. It is employed by Teschke (2009) in his account of the origins of the modern system of sovereign states, and it is further developed by Lacher (2006) in a critique of globalisation theory. Both see the institutionalisation of sovereign statehood as a product of the spatial aspect of class strategies of reproduction. Forms of political authority are seen as an object of class struggle. The key, therefore, is not to explain their autonomous (or even relatively autonomous) development, or how they are determined by "the economy". Instead, by understanding geopolitics as the clash of spatialisation strategies of different actors in their processes of reproduction, we are able to conceive the affirmation and contestation of given forms of political authority as an object of class struggle in its own right. As a result of this broader notion of geopolitics, the traditional idea of disputes of territory between states according to the strategic value they attribute to such territories according to their own goals (such as existential security) becomes a clash of *geopolicies* institutionalised as practices of foreign policy through processes that are specific to each of their institutional forms.

This reconstruction of historical materialism in IR allows for a new reading of Brazilian state formation that is developed in three steps, divided across the historical chapters in this thesis (Chapters 3, 4 and 5). Firstly, it consists of a reassessment of Portuguese overseas expansionism that elucidates its origins and the forms of social relations that it created in its South American colony – Brazil. Secondly, it looks at the events that prompted the transition of that colony towards a condition of sovereign statehood. Thirdly, it evaluates the way in which foreign policy making in the recently consolidated sovereign state change under the Second Empire – that is, once the elite that established its sovereign condition is no longer in place, and as it continues changing in a process of class differentiation that culminates in the fall of the House of Braganza and the proclamation of the Old Republic in 1889.

In Chapter 3, I discuss how the process of maritime expansion in Portugal led to the colonial encounter in South America, and, through geopolitical competition, to the establishment of a colony named after its main commodity – Brazil. By tracing the practices of spatialisation of the Portuguese elite throughout the (roughly) three centuries of colonialism in Brazil, I was able to configure its constantly contested nature. Its transatlantic expansion begins through the disputes between the Portuguese Crown and its surrounding nobility (both in Portugal and in Castille) and is taken to the establishment of a colony through the competition of other European powers, in a way that is conditioned by the resistance presented by Native American communities along the coast. By the time plantation systems are in place in Brazil, its entanglement in European dynastic disputes changes, creating disputes over who can rule Lisbon and Brazil. During the 17th century, Portugal is integrated into Spain under a common Habsburg monarch, becomes involved in the Dutch wars of independence (in which it loses its Eastern colonies, and, for a period, a portion of Brazil), and is re-established as an independent Kingdom through the action of Britain as the guarantor of its protection from Spain. As an outcome, Portugal and Brazil are placed within the sphere of British informal empire, a condition that would be determinant for its trajectory during the 18th century. By the early 19th century, the Portuguese monarchy is caught amidst a strong political crisis generated both by fears of social revolution – both in Europe and in America – and by the threat of Napoleon’s army.

By looking at the historical development of Portuguese colonial practices in their geopolitical context, I am able to establish that they were not united by an overarching logic of colonialism. Instead, the strategies devised in Lisbon to deal with

overseas explorations at first – and colonialism later – are ridden with innovative responses to the pressures presented by competing geopolitics within Europe, and in America. It also establishes how a process of class differentiation leads to the creation of a Brazilian ruling class that begins to contest Portuguese colonial rule, playing a crucial role in the process of formal independence.

In Chapter 4, I begin from the threat imposed by Napoleon upon the Portuguese monarchy, and the late decision to relocate the entire Court of the Empire to Rio de Janeiro under British protection. This unparalleled event in human history – the moving of an Empire’s capital to one of its colonies – triggers many complications in both Portugal and Brazil. While in the latter the local elites were now closer to the court and even shared some interests (such as the end of the monopoly of Portuguese ships over Brazilian trade), the former experienced a period of occupation by the French army, followed by a period of social and political upheaval that demanded the return of the court to Lisbon and the establishment of a liberal constitution. Dom João VI, the king of the transatlantic Luso-Brazilian Empire, balanced the pressures from both sides with the support of his British allies until the 1820s. When the situation became untenable, he decided to return to Lisbon. His son, Pedro, remained in Brazil as the Prince Regent, and allied himself to the movement of Brazilian landowners that defied the Portuguese *Côrtes* and eventually led Brazil towards formal independence as a monarchy under a South American branch of the House of Braganza.

The use of the expression “formal independence” is justified by the geopolitical entanglements – also tracked in Chapter 4 – that remain in place during the First Empire. British diplomacy continued to play a crucial role in both sides of the House of Braganza. Both of them depended on British support to guarantee their security: it was its alliance with Britain that kept Portugal away from the influence of the Holy Alliance, and it was also what guaranteed Portuguese recognition of Brazilian independence. At the same time, the elites in both sides of the Atlantic continued to be heavily dependent upon the access to British markets for their social reproduction. At last, as the recognition of Brazilian independence from Portugal was mediated by a British diplomat under direct orders to preserve the interests of the Braganzas in both sides of the Atlantic, it made no mention of separate rules of succession. As a result, the possibility of reuniting the empire under Pedro after the death of his father still cast a shadow over the sovereign ambitions of the Brazilian elite. This created strong tensions between Brazilian landowners and the remnants of Portuguese aristocracy

within the Brazilian elite, which culminated in Pedro's abdication of the Brazilian throne and a series of separatist movements throughout Brazil.

By tracking the social and geopolitical roots of sovereign statehood in Brazil, this narrative moves away from the idea of the state as an ontological starting point of international politics. It breaks the assumed connection between the existence of the state and a "national interest" that plays the fundamental role in defining its identity and its response to the norms and values of international society. In the Brazilian case, the various interests that are involved in the process of creating a sovereign state are not "national", and all of them pre-exist both the "state" and the "nation". By focusing on the concrete practices on which such "interests" find their material underpinning, this framework refers to them as *geopolicies* – as sets of foreign policy practices produced through the clashes between particular practices of reproduction of concrete actors.

In Chapter 5 I analyse what happens to the geopolitics formulated by the Brazilian elite – not as a direct manifestation of its political will, but through the outcomes of many instances of both vertical and horizontal class struggle – during the Second Empire. Between the period of political stability established around the figure of the new Emperor Pedro II in the 1840s, and the political crisis that led to the end of the monarchy in 1889, I identify a process of class differentiation within the Brazilian landowners that has important implications for understanding policy-making in that period. In particular, in the context of changes in land property laws and the slow transition from slave to wage labour in the period, a portion of that landowning elite who responded to those transitions by innovating their practices of reproduction to these new realities faced the resistance of those who tried to hold on to their more traditional practices. One example of this process is the way in which the abolition of slavery slowly gains the support of part of this landowning elite through the 1870s and 1880s.

As a result, this historical account moves away from the assumptions that Brazilian policy-making was aimed at obtaining a better status in the states-system (which can be conceived either in terms of "modernisation" or "civilisation"), since the social disputes that shape the state's policy making demonstrate that those who are resisting these transitions continue to be an influent force until 1889. It also moves away from structuralist accounts that consist of explanations of how Brazilian statehood operates based on its position within the international division of labour or

within British informal empire. Instead, by tracing policy-making to the social clashes of concrete actors that shape the state and its policies, I am able to account for the peculiarities of Brazilian development through the 19th century. The crucial move in that respect is to trace historical outcomes back to the practices and strategies of reproduction of the actors who influenced their making in an interpretative effort to understand these actors in their respective processes of becoming, rather than to rely on historical assumptions to provide a theory that can explain how Brazilian development or foreign policy operated in that period which ultimately omits the role of some of these actors in the making of Brazilian history. Marx once suggested that “humans make their own history, but not under conditions of their own choosing” (Marx, 1999a, p. 5). While most of IR theories emphasise the implications of the latter part of the sentence, this thesis restores the relevance of the former for IHS in IR.

As a final thought, it is important to highlight the impact that the historical narrative and theoretical argument presented here have on the Brazilian literature about state-formation. The literature that deals with this process within IR (Cervo, 2008; Cervo and Bueno, 2008) relies on a notion of “national interest” that is questioned by a different conception of the discipline presented in this thesis, as well as in the field of IHS as a whole. For these scholars, the “national interest” appears as a core analytical category symbolising not only the pre-existence but also the political will of a “nation”, whose interests within a system of sovereign states can even be deduced from its systemic features – be it its anarchical structure, or the international competition between capitalist states. In doing so, their argument brings as one of its initial premises the existence of “Brazil” not only as a legal and political entity, but as one with a clear political will (that is, not only as a state, but as one with a clear “national interest”) which in many ways is precisely what must be explained by an account of state-formation.

Instead, the existence of the state is taken by these scholars as a historical process in itself, and, as such, is analysed in a contextualised way, through the lenses of the agencies involved in making it and resisting it. In other words, rather than treating the “national interest” of 19th-century Brazil as being objectively and logically derivable from its situation within a system of sovereign states infused by capitalist competition, the notion of *geopolíticas* is introduced to open space for the intra-elite class struggle in shaping not only what is understood as “national interest”, but both state structures and the strategies of foreign policy. As a consequence, the foreign

policy practiced during the Second Empire cannot be described as being a clearer manifestation of this “national interest” than that of the First Empire. Instead, we must understand how the political balance between different ruling classes and their competing geopolitics changed within the Brazilian state across the nineteenth century.

In fact, this thesis is much closer to the tradition of Brazilian historiography, in which such a narrative of state-formation as an open-ended historical process, understood through the clashes between contextualised agencies has been developed (Bethell, 1989; de Azevedo, 1987; De Carvalho, 2003; Faoro, 2001; Fernandes, 2015; Franco, 1997; Gorender, 1978; Prado Jr., 2012; Saes, 1990; Viotti da Costa, 2000; *et al.*). These scholars have provided rich analyses that frame, in different ways, the process of state-formation as a dispute among conflicting interests. In that debate, the radical historicism developed in this thesis through the framework of Geopolitical Marxism provides important contributions.

This contribution resides, firstly, in a refined notion of historical agency. By framing it through Wood’s category of “class as process”, the argument presented here emphasises both vertical and horizontal class struggle, opening possibilities for revitalised conversations on different forms of political subjectivity, and the respective practices through which they shaped the Brazilian state. Secondly, by treating these practices of spatialised political activity as *geopolitics*, this framework overcomes the limitations of methodological nationalism. As a result, “Brazil” is not locked in the dichotomy between the “national” and the “international”, but understood through the disputes between geopolitical practices by actors that relied (in many different – and often antagonistic – ways) on the rule over the institutions that constituted it.

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, by challenging certain structural legacies within the social sciences, this framework also challenges an incipient Eurocentrism that insists in analysing Brazilian historical experience within the limits of, or in relation to, concepts and theoretical formulations which were imagined to explain European cases – such as “modernisation”, “bourgeois revolution”, or certain readings of “capitalism”. By revisiting this historiographical literature and pushing Political Marxism towards its radical historicist form, this thesis provides a renewed account of the geopolitical character of the disputes that shaped the creation of Brazil as a state, while acknowledging non-European agencies in the making of their own histories.

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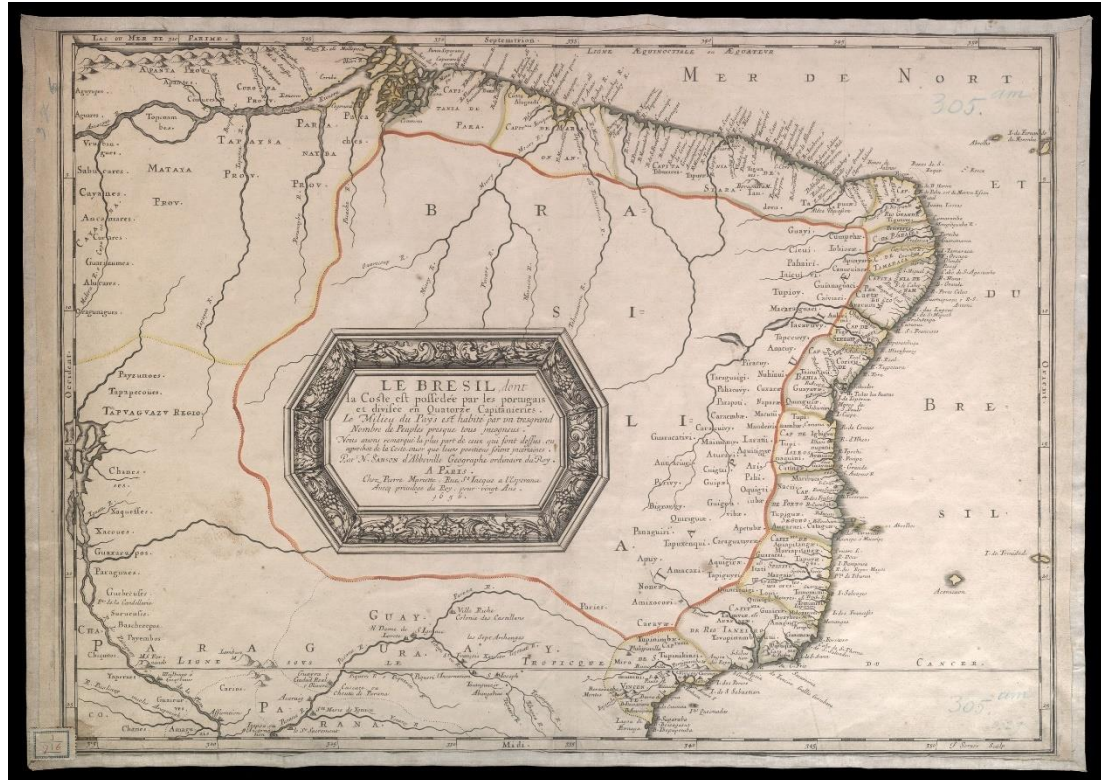
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Appendix: Maps

Map 1 – Brazil and the *capitanias hereditárias* in the early colonial period



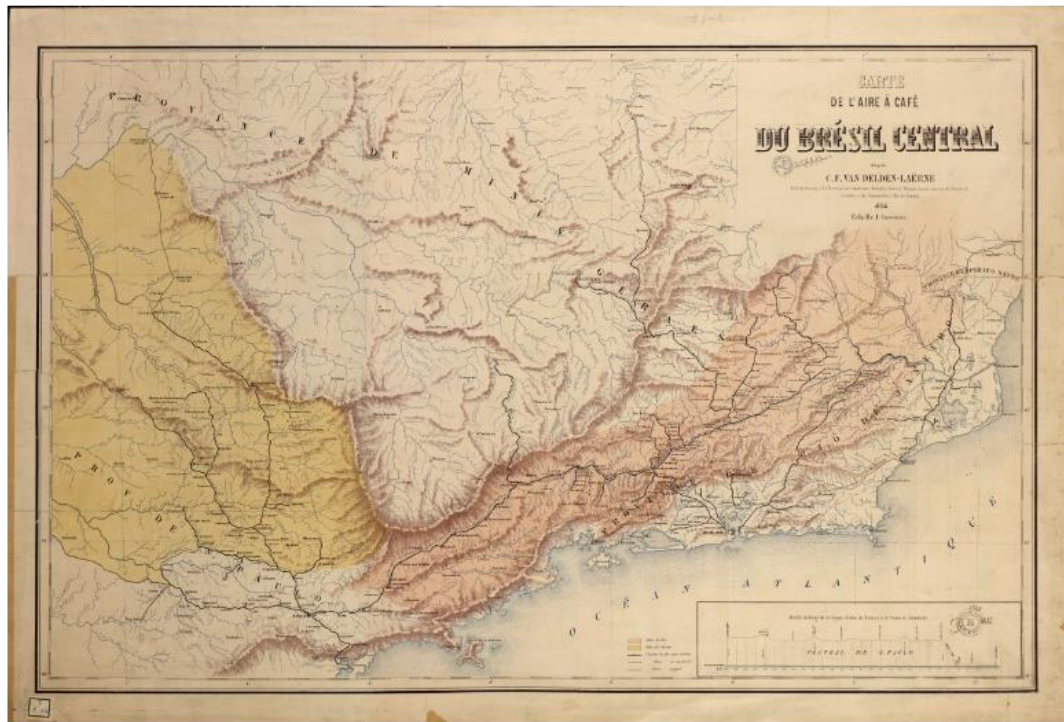
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Map 2 – Political organisation of Brazil in the 19th century



PONTE RIBEIRO, Duarte da - Carta do Império do Brazil: reduzida no Archivo Militar em conformidade da publicada pelo coronel Conrado Jacob de Niemeyer em 1846 e das especiaes das fronteiras com os estados limitrophes. Rio de Janeiro: Lit. Arch. Militar, 1873. 1 mapa, col., 64 x 63cm. Available at: http://objdigital.bn.br/objdigital2/acervo_digital/div_cartografia/cart163386/cart163386.htm. Last accessed in 01/09/2017

Map 3 – Oeste Paulista and Vale do Paraíba



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