

## Brazil and Guyana: from distant Neighbors to potential Partners

Thiago Gehre e Erick Linhares<sup>21</sup>

### *Abstract:*

The renewed interest of the Brazilian government in countries like Guyana and Suriname has sparked a set of bilateral and multilateral actions that aim to expand networks in the neighborhood of Brazil's Amazon region, seeking to strengthen the Brazilian presence at the northern borders of South America. They envision a contribution to the reduction of regional asymmetries in South America. Therefore, it has become necessary to understand how Guyanese-Brazilian relations have overcome their mutual feeling of detachment - which for a while posed as something of an obstacle - in favor of a potential partnership between neighbors.

**Key Words:** Guyana, Brazilian Foreign Policy, History of International Relations, International Relations of Brazil, Amazonia.

*Through a strengthened relationship with Brazil, we can change rhetoric to action and reinforce in the minds of young Guyanese that they are South Americans as much as they belong to Caribbean nations, and that their prosperity can be enhanced by relationships south of our border (Speech by Bharrat Jagdeo 2009).*

Between the 11th and 12th of September 2012, the Brazilian Defense Minister Celso Amorim was on an official visit to Georgetown, Guyana's capital. The Brazilian government agreed to support the modernization of the Guyanese defense, through training initiatives and military training, the sharing of knowledge, joint action across borders, and the revitalization of military equipment.

The gap between the two neighbors would seem to have been reduced gradually due to the promise of a potential bilateral partnership. In fact, the underlying interest of Brasilia has been to encourage Guyana's participation in the process of coordinating a defense for South America, henceforth inserting the country into a larger scheme of South American integration; and thereby promising to enhance the potential of a partnership between the two neighbors.

This article sets out from the assumption that relations between Brazil and Guyana have undergone a certain historical

process of transition: from relative distance to potential partnership. It seeks to emphasize the origins of Guyana's international relations (explaining the country's current international profile), Brazil's concern with Guyana in the 1970s and 1980s (which alludes to a challenge to the assumption of Brazil's having had a negligent stance with its neighbor), and the richness that has marked Brazilian-Guyanese historical relations since the 1960s, thereby rejecting claims of "precarious relations" and the supposed scarcity of bilateral contacts between the two nations.

### *The Context of Decolonization*

The change in Britain's colonial maneuvers was accompanied by liberal criticism at the beginning of the 20th century, namely with regard to the sterile state the use of force had found itself in, as well as the high cost of maintaining colonies. As pointed out by Sir Norman Angell (2002, 96), "the only possible behavior in terms of colonies is to treat them as independent nations or foreign, and the only way to 'possess' them is to refrain from performing the duties of the possessor".

Countries with a direct interest in having a balanced state of affairs on South America's northern edge, namely Brazil, Guyana and Venezuela, were particularly attentive with regard

21. Thiago Gehre is PhD in International Relations at the University of Brasilia and lectures at the Federal University of Roraima (UFRR), and Erick Linhares is PhD in International Relations at the University of Brasilia, and he collaborates in the Masters Degree in Regional Development at the Nucleus for Research in Amazonia and the Caribbean (Necar/UFRR).



to the position of London's Foreign Office. London had enough political and economic clout to hang on to the destiny of the colony that was theirs, moving to block or delay the spirits of emancipation. The Commonwealth was more inclined to concede independence to Australia and South Africa, for example, which since the interwar period had become part of it (Galvão 2012).

In the case of British Guyana, London proved itself to be reticent in pronouncing independence because the country has been a colony rich in natural resources such as sugar and bauxite; and possesses a still untapped interior. Moreover, there was major concern over the possible adherence of an independent Guyana to the Communist bloc, despite not being aware of the exact degree of Moscow's influence on the independence-driven or secessionist tendencies that were vigorously growing inside the heart of Guyana.

Inside Guyana's political context, there had been a split among three groups. On the one hand, Cheddi Jagan's group was at that moment in favor of resolving the issue of the Essequibo with Venezuela, as well as expressing keenness on an approximation with Moscow and the India governed by Nehru at that time. The Indian leftist leader had weighed upon the intellectual formation of Jagan. The opposition to these postures was led by L. F. S. Burnham, who swaggered between the rhetoric of a "continental destiny," which counted on the rapprochement with Brazil as a counterweight to Venezuelan pressure, and the pragmatic force of a "Caribbean destination" that would foster development through foreign links and by projecting an image of itself as a regional leader. Moreover, there was a third group which served directly to foreign interests, wishing to be an underling to such multinationals as the sugar consortium "Brooker Brothers, Mc Connel & Co, Ltd", (Linhares 2011; Galvão 2012).

It was the political victory of Burnham, upheld by an Anglo-American collusion, which would allow Guyanese independence. On May 26, 1966, the Duke of Kent, sent by Queen Elizabeth II, held an official meeting with Forbes Burnham in Parliament for the transmission of the constitutional instruments to grant independence to Guyana. Consequently, the Foreign Office achieved what it had craved for: control of the pace of independence, continued influence in the formulation of foreign policy - coupled with international trade - just as the British had achieved with its other colonies and domains (Girault et al 2005).

### *The Uniqueness of Guyana*

From then on the development bandwagon strategy was to be established, based on external funding. Various Guyanese

leaders understood that this help was necessary, in the long run, to build genuine independence, since this would provide the capital and technology to steer Guyana away from being overshadowed by industrialized nations, and in the direction of a self-sustaining country. Therefore, much of the discussion about the role of foreign investment would not cause unrest in the British and Americans, since their economic interests would be safe in the context of an independent Guyana (Burnham 1970).

The historical direction of Guyana would be to ensure international support without catalyzing internal fragmentation. Guyanese leaders paid attention to the fact that they would need foreign aid for years in order to build a country and consolidate the sovereignty of a young nation. In 1966 the government announced a great plan of prosperity that would demand foreign loans and investments from abroad. Moreover, the good relations between Washington and Georgetown, especially between 1966 and 1970, did away with British interventionism's becoming a "necessary evil" (Hintzen 2003; Rabe 2005).

However, there was some degree of contradiction in Guyana's domestic and foreign policies. Specifically, a turn to the left was demonstrated by Georgetown in 1970, reaching the political and economic dimensions. In the political sphere, the PNC acquired traditions like unionism, anti-colonialism and the desire for the independence of its people. The construction of a socialist discourse with mass appeal legitimized the establishment of a governance model called Cooperative Republic, as well as the launch of a Socialist Plan (Burnham 1970).

In economic terms, the assertion of independence came to mean, for the Burnham government, balanced relations, anti-imperialism, and, in the end, autonomy. Likewise, warnings of the dangers of foreign investment escalated, there also being warnings about the misappropriation of the country's natural resources. With this, the government accelerated the pace of economic "Guyanization", providing special credits and licenses to protect domestic firms. There was also an attack upon foreign properties (Rabe 2005).

The nationalization of foreign companies and the incorporation of resources by the Guyanese government would transform a colonial type of economy into a national economy, able to produce a just and prosperous society, with Georgetown at the center. However, the dilemma that imposed itself was that Burnham was reluctant to stand completely contrary to multinational corporations and foreign investment, declaring this to be an extreme measure (Turno 1988).

Nonetheless, due to the Western powers' special conditions for the provision of economic aid, and the imposition of "stability" programs (which were usually unpopular), a socialist perspective in Guyana's foreign policy was bound to appear, especially



when Georgetown considered the political cost of the West's policy reforms to be unacceptable. Consequently, Burnham took advantage of this perspective on foreign interference to intensify the anti-imperialist discourse as a threat to the "Guyanese revolution" (Burnham 1970).

In fact, the international image of Guyana was that of being an independent state, "socialist" but orientated according to its own interests and unique domestic features. Thus, in order to prevent an excess of culture shock, foreign intervention or isolation, Georgetown had to quickly adapt to a Cold War context, all the while preserving its singularity of being a country with an uncertain destiny in relation to its own continent, but also counting on the international mainstream's development strategies.

### *Adaptation in times of Cold War*

After 1959, the Cuban revolution had spread the fear of increasing Soviet influence in the Americas, from the Caribbean to the Southern Cone of South America, threatening regional political stability, and certainly hindering the business prospects of Western capitalist groups. Given this atmosphere, the negotiation for independence became the first major foreign policy challenge for Guyana, and was carried out within the rules established, by unwritten alliance, between London and Washington.

Having established the direction of independence, the subsequent movement in Guyanese foreign policy to emerge was concerned with the preservation of territorial sovereignty. In this case, the uncertainties with Venezuela over the Essequibo region, and the dispute with Suriname over the "New River Triangle", were weighty issues for Georgetown (Cardoso 2010).

The third axis of foreign policy for Guyana was to survive in a world of giants. Georgetown glimpsed in the Cold War a complex environment of opportunity and challenge. If, on the one hand, the conflict encouraged the great powers to pay attention to small states and set in motion a substantial flow of material rewards for alignment, on the other hand, there was the risk that the superpowers may interfere in internal affairs and destabilize the country (Jackson 2003).

Therefore, Guyana opted to maintain a cautious equidistant position in relation to the superpowers, which enabled it to avoid the consequences of unnecessary political risks, facilitate dialogue, receive economic aid from both sides, and reduce the impact of asymmetries in negotiations and talks on the various issues of international politics.

There were, however, counterpoises to this equidistant position, as was the case in the country's political recognition of Cuba, the support for the Popular Movement for the Li-

beration of Angola (MPLA), its anti-apartheid rhetoric, support for the Palestinian-Arab cause, the calling for a New International Economic Order in multilateral arenas, besides visits and contacts with Eastern European countries and the People's Republic of China. Even the opposition leader, Cheddi Jagan, came to take up a radical turn towards a Moscow-like socialist regime (Rabe 2005).

The fourth issue of contention in Guyana's foreign policy was based on the country's insertion into an unequal world order. The exclusion of the country from international decisions on key issues, the simplification of the international agenda on security issues, the neglect of underdeveloped nations, and the contamination of international institutions like the United Nations by the interests of the great powers, encouraged Georgetown to search for opportunities by participating in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) (Bernard 1993).

The NAM was created to mask pro-communist leanings and to alleviate Western pressures, but also enabled Guyana to participate actively in international affairs. The country held various chairmanships and vice-chairmanships, and actively participated in some of the movement's more specific agencies, such as the Group of 77 and the International Bauxite Association (IBA). Moreover, Guyana really exerted some radical opinions within this movement, displaying an exacerbated radicalism against major economies' intervention and a quixotesque idealism on issues like Apartheid.

To sum up, Guyana's foreign affairs were influenced by a development model coupled with the Eurasian and North American streams, but also tailored to a specific adaptation to Cold War times. That demanded from Georgetown an equidistant posture in its contacts with Soviets and Americans, as well as an autonomist trend ideologically oriented towards non-alignment. Consequently, this kind of extra-regional vocation pushed Guyana away from South America and, perhaps, was responsible for an intermittent "sentiment of distance" between Guyanese and Brazilians.

### *That 'sentiment of distance' becomes relative*

Guyana has never stopped looking at South America as an option for regional integration, neither with its eye on territorial issues, nor in view of the opportunities that Brazil could offer. In this sense, political and diplomatic efforts have been carried out by Brasilia and Georgetown to make room for changes in a context of unequal bipolarity. One may find that the distance between them may have to be challenged by the organized forces of the political and diplomatic spheres. Without a doubt, by invoking a favorable congregation of actors under a new set of circumstances, the inertia of that historical sentiment of distance would be likely to be broken.



In the State House, the seat of government for Guyana in Georgetown, one looked beyond the natural admiration it held for the organization of Brazil's Foreign Ministry and the Rio Branco Institute (where, later on, Guyanese diplomats would receive their training). One cultivated the hope that Brazilian diplomacy would serve to counter-balance the dispute for territory that had long arisen between neighbors. Hence, the priority to establish territorial integrity made the amplification of relations with Brazil a strategic line of action (Linhares 2011).

In Brasilia, the balance of forces on the northern border was conceived to be as important as any other issue in the Southern Cone, especially because Itamaraty would always work to prevent that territorial disputes open into conflict. The penetration of great powers would obviously prove to be a source of instability in that portion of South America.

Brazil has officially manifested its neutrality in the dispute over the Essequibo. This has been a pleasant surprise for Georgetown, making way for the official mission - composed of several ministers and headed by Vice Prime Minister Ptolemy Alexander Reid - which headed to Brasilia in 1968. It was the first high-level contact between the two countries; and that which "formalized the establishment of diplomatic relations." The joint communiqué of the meeting records states that the discussions took place in a tone of cordiality and friendship. One year later, the Center for Brazilian Studies at Georgetown was established, promoting a wider understanding of Brazil and Brazilian society for the Guyanese People (Linhares 2011).

In 1969, the Foreign Minister of Guyana, Shiridath Ramphal, was in Brazil; and in 1971 the Brazilian foreign minister, Gibson Barbosa, reciprocated that visit. As a concrete result of these initiatives, a bi-national commission for economic cooperation was established, offering a line of credit to Guyana. The most controversial decision, however, was to open the embassy in Brasilia in 1968, attracting the indignation of the opposition who had constantly warned about the dangers of close relations with Brazil (Jackson 2003).

When it opened, Cheddi Jagan described the attitude as "the most recent waste of public resources" and Forbes Burnham was condemned for "allying Guyana with Brazil's reactionary military regime." For Jagan (1972, 42), continental integration was not the way to go and Guyana's bonds with Brazil would represent the worst aspect of the Latin Americanization of Guyanese politics and culture. In an editorial titled "The question of Brazil", in *The Mirror* newspaper of August 10th, 1972, opposition voices prophesized that "despite the warnings, Burnham insists on approaching the fascist government of Brazil, to the point of sending military personnel to be trained there."

To change that distancing between Guyana and Brazil was to be a difficult task, especially when the State House would not evaluate the consequences of contradicting its own equidistance in foreign policy within the Cold War context. By allowing, in 1975, the landing of Cuban aircraft in its territory to supply military personnel to Angola, Georgetown caused deep irritation in the governments of the U.S. and Brazil. A decision was made to take troops to the border with Guyana, and the diplomatic agencies made sure that the country knew that its borderlines were, at that opportunity, being subject to inspection (Turno 1988, 110).

Under pressure by Venezuela over the disputed area of the Essequibo River, Georgetown could not afford to permit a simultaneous deterioration of its relations with Brazil and Venezuela. This idea would become another premise of Guyanese foreign policy.

In July 1976, Fred Willis, Guyanese Minister of Foreign Affairs, visited Brazil and established the principles that would guide the relations between the two countries: non-interference in internal affairs, peaceful resolution of conflicts, territorial integrity and the inviolability of Guyana's borders (Jackson 2003, 42).

Indeed, it is possible to assert that Guyana's autonomous posture and its involvement with typical issues of the Cold War warned Brazil that the Amazon was not just an empty, apolitical void, and that other neighboring countries had to be taken into account for the formulation of a strategy of regional integration.

In 1977, in a formidable diplomatic bid, the Brazilian government invited Guyana to participate, along with six other South American countries, in the creation of a sub-regional cooperation effort entitled the Amazon Cooperation Treaty (ACT), which would evolve with the institutionalization of the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO) in 2002.

The signing of the ACT in Brasilia in July 1978 had a broad significance: it provided a special opportunity to discuss Guyana-Brazil bilateral relations beyond the issue of border security. It represented the beginning of the process of multilateral cooperation among the eight Amazonian states, being the first agreement signed between Georgetown and Caracas, and wrought significant agreements between the Amazon's countries, mainly at the commercial and technical levels. Finally, it represented a seed of ecological awareness in the collective mentalities of the Amazon (Silveira 2005, 72; Procópio 1992, 233).

Following the multilateral understanding achieved at that point, Saraiva Guerreiro, the Brazilian Minister of Foreign Relations, visited Georgetown in January 1982 and signed several treaties, in



particular one which foresaw the construction of the bridge over the Takutu River, finally opened in September 2009. Brazilian-Guyanese relations followed a trajectory of “distance reduction” with a series of meetings between presidents and foreign ministers.

Burnham visited President Figueiredo in Brasilia between September and October 1982. The contacts were resumed in 1988, when the Brazilian minister of Foreign Affairs Roberto de Abreu Sodré visited Georgetown. Four months later, President José Sarney was in Guyana in what would be the first official diplomatic mission of a Brazilian president to that neighbor. Sarney praised ethnicity, Amazonian nature and the ideal of democracy, receiving in the following year President Hugh Desmond Hoyte (1986-1991), who had decided to return the visit made by Sarney.

Nevertheless, in the light of Brazil’s focus on the Southern Cone of South America, deeply preoccupied with dialogues on nuclear cooperation, political cooperation, and the establishment of a trading bloc, affairs with countries to the North gained less strategic importance, eclipsing those previous initiatives made by Itamaraty. Brazil’s foreign office seemed to maintain just a surface of formal contact with Amazon neighbors in the 1990s.

It can be said that Guyana was not seen as a “niche of opportunity”, and hence would not be a priority in Brazilian diplomatic strategy during the 1990s. Likewise, after the rise to power of Cheddi Jagan (1992-1997), the State House reciprocated Brazil’s lukewarm receptivity, being more selective on policies and maintaining low intensity when it came to foreign issues. With Jagan’s death in 1997, his wife Janet was elected president, but resigned two years later because of health problems, paving the way for the election of Bharrat Jagdeo who resumed approximation with Brazil in an attempt to fulfill the so called “continental destiny” which had been so often delayed.

### *The Potential for a Partnership in an unequal World Order*

The profound transformations of the post-Cold War era would lead Guyana to a new adaptation, since the shattering of ideological conflict truly neutralized its foreign policy of equidistance and non alignment. Beforehand confronted by bipolarity and searching to find its balance between the two blocks of immense power, Guyana now faced a new geometry in international politics, but remained full of the old problems: the industrialized nations still blocked the economic development of underdeveloped countries, and international isolation

had become a reality for a poor country which continued to be ignored by richer ones (Hoyte 1997, 123).

The dichotomy between rich and poor would deeply mark the order Guyana had entered into during the 1990’s. Georgetown’s perception was one that powerful nations would be engaged in a subtle but incessant effort to subjugate and exploit the weakest ones. At the same time, the rise of new powers with historical ties to the country, such as India and China, has revealed new “unequal bandwagon” development opportunities which could be favorable for Guyana (Procópio 2011).

However, the options presented by the Brics,<sup>22</sup> “whale countries” with a large appetite for natural resources and holding historical, geographical and ideological ties with Guyana, did not translated into a comfortable position for Guyana to negotiate with. The asymmetries between the Brics and Guyana have created a shadow with regard to cooperation instruments such as diplomatic negotiations, technical and financial assistance, and trade.

Fear of isolation, the damages dealt by an unequal international order, and frustration with regional arrangements such as Caribbean Community and Common Market (Caricom) - leaving the nation unable to implement development policies - have led Georgetown to take up a partnership with Brazil again. Some factors have contributed to this idea of a potential partnership between the two neighbors.

First of all, even if it was a modest level of commercial activity, it can be stated that there was a significant increase in exports from Brazil to Guyana, by way of bilateral trade between the two countries, in the order of \$ 9.7 million in 2003 to nearly \$ 36 million in 2011. Brazilian exports show up in a wide range of products such as chain saws for manual use, tractors, tiles and ceramic glazes, enamels, hydraulic pumps, tools, diggers, beef sausages and other prepared foods, diesel engines, machinery for harvesting, furniture and wooden items.

#### Brazilian-Guyanese Commerce (2003-2012)

| Two-year period | Exports    | Imports   | Total Commerce |
|-----------------|------------|-----------|----------------|
| 2003-2004       | 23.328.895 | 10.414    | 23.339.309     |
| 2005-2006       | 36.808.158 | 11.559    | 36.819.717     |
| 2007-2008       | 38.815.612 | 2.267.590 | 41.083.202     |
| 2009-2010       | 46.782.194 | 1.058.164 | 47.840.358     |
| 2011-2012       | 60.358.156 | 183.141   | 60.541.297     |

Source: Table adapted Secex-Midic; Standard U.S. \$ / FOB.

22. Acronym which refers to Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, a politically aligned group of emerging economies.



An analysis of trade between Guyana and Brazil allows us to identify that Brazilian exports to Guyana had followed increases of 40.62% (2003-2004), 21.79% (2004-2005) and 21.68% (2005-2006), which explains the re-evaluation of commercial relations during the administration of President Lula. Since 2007 commercial relations have fluctuated with falls and recoveries, the total of commerce maintaining a growth trend in each successive two-year period, and even achieving the amazing figures of more than 60 million dollars in the 2011-2012 two-year period.

However, the low volume of imports from Guyana to Brazil has become a concern, since the situation remained this way until 2007 (the year when imports reached nearly \$ 2 million), then declining severely over the last five years. President Jagdeo, in a meeting with Lula, asserted that “we need to reduce the imbalance in our trade”, promising that Guyana would try to emulate Brazil in its Program for Competitive Import Substitution in order to boost its exports to the “Southern Colossus”.

The second element of the potential for partnership is related to the geographical proximity between neighbors. The opening of the bridge over the river Takutu, inaugurated on September 14th, 2009, became a landmark of approximation. For Brazil it would be the opportunity to incorporate Guyana “definitively in South America,” as well as to project the small country into the Caribbean region, naturally a space where the integrative interests of the Union of South American Nations (Unasur) would be in evidence in the near future.

In addition, the construction of the Brazil-Guyana Bridge has re-affirmed a political will to break with the physical and psychological barriers that had created obstacles for the country’s integration to South America. The symbolism of the event was described by the president of Guyana: “as we walk the Takutu River Bridge this afternoon, we take a tangible step towards reaffirming in both Guyana and Brazil, and in the minds of both Guyanese and Brazilians, that we belong to the same Region.”

Thirdly, the potential for partnership lies in the question of regional identity. The historical closeness to Brazil, alongside the country’s presence in forums such as Unasur, have aided in establishing the identity of Guyana in South America. In addition, the Brazilian government is keen to stress that the process of the integration of South America will not advance unless it includes countries such as Suriname and Guyana.

Likewise, the government of Donald Ramotar, current president of Guyana who took office in December 2011, has renewed the nation’s willingness to follow the path of “South-Americanization” in his foreign policy, thereby strengthening the sense of Guyana’s continental destiny. Moreover,

Ramotar’s government has sought to reinforce in the minds of young Guyanese that they are as South American as much as they are Caribbean, and that prosperity can be strengthened in the region and to the local Amazonian frontier.

Another ingredient of identification to be highlighted refers to the Brazilian presence in Guyana, especially with the miners in search of gold and diamond for their survival. A significant chain of migration begins in the northeast of Brazil, crosses the Amazon, and ends in the forests of Guyana, Suriname and French Guiana. Due to the ever increasing number of “nearly 35 thousand in the region”, the consequences represent cause for a state of high alert, with resulting concerns about insecurity and instability in the northern portion of South America (IstoÉ Magazine 2012).

Brazilian immigration to Guyana has a character of seasonality, but leaves visible marks in the formation of ghettos and the appearance of guybras, children of Brazilians with Guyanese, kinds of “transboundary agents” who dominate the cultural and linguistic codes of both peoples. In fact, the Brazilian presence provokes disturbances both in social groups, where jobs are threatened, and in the government, which sees growth in other illegal practices such as smuggling, trafficking of all kinds, prostitution and violence involving the Brazilian miners – the miners themselves becoming victims of robberies and murders.

This phenomenon could be seen as a challenge that is being addressed as a matter of regional security, but also as a chance to expand the points of contact between Brazil and Guyana.

In this sense, confidence in a partnership with Brazil would be a fourth element to motivate the bilateral relations between the neighbors. Georgetown identifies with the leadership shown by Brazil in bilateral and multilateral arenas, and in particular in Lula’s presidential diplomacy. It could be an opportunity to face challenges and find solutions to the historical problems of isolation or underdevelopment, and rid the country of its dependence on foreign aid. The perception of Georgetown is that strengthening relations with Brazil can move from rhetoric to action in various fields of mutual interest.

The sixth factor to be considered in a potential partnership is related to energy. The Brazilian government has been researching and has proposed agreements with neighboring South American countries, aiming at regional energy integration. In this case, studies are being conducted to prepare an inventory of hydropower in Guyana, whose potential is estimated to be around 7.5 to 8 GW. The objective is to advance negotiations to build one or two power plants in Guyana and import part of the electricity produced there (Plano 2011).



Indeed, Guyana needs power to realize its potential for cooperation and investment, as well as to carry on its development projects. Since 2009 conversations have been held to arrange details of projects, finance, construction, as well as the participation of Brazilian companies in the venture. We will probably see Andrade Gutierrez playing a large role. The idea is that power generation could reach Roraima, still disconnected from the National Interconnected System (SIN), but dependent on the electrical interconnection with the Guri transmission line which comes from Venezuela (Aguiar 2011).

The seventh element refers to the potential of the partnership in the field of defense and security cooperation. At the meeting in September 2012 in Georgetown, Celso Amorim and the Defense Secretary of Guyana proposed a revision in the cooperation program in order to strengthen existing bilateral and multilateral collaboration. The intensification of bilateral cooperation in defense aims to promote mutual trust between Brazil, Guyana and South American neighbors, especially at the northern borders.

There have been various concrete results. It was decided to create a Bilateral Working Group on Defense in order to follow the agenda through annual meetings with high-level representatives. Collaborative measures and cooperation in military training and education were defined, geo-technology applied to defense and security, formulation of defense contracts, military operations and the development of joint projects in border areas, as well as a military mission in Brazil, were prepared with a degree of technical evaluation to provide advice and support to the Defence Force Guyana (Communique 2012).

The goal is to improve the integration, stability and service in border communities, involving civil society in discussions, information and knowledge exchange among officials of the two countries, and increase specialization in deficient areas, offering opportunities for the Guyanese military to conduct training in Brazil, and to train Guyanese employees in SIVAM (Integrated System for the Vigilance of the Brazilian Amazon) an installation in Manaus (Communiqué 2012).

### *Final Considerations*

The notion of “distance” in international relations is complex, meaning physical and intangible aspects that hinder the pro-

cess of approximation and integration. Therefore, the cooperative policies adopted by Brazil and Guyana have generated geopolitical, economic and diplomatic “proximity”, fulfilling spatial consistency, institutional identity and potential partnership on complementary scales: continental, regional, South American and locally on the Amazonian frontier.

Guyana has faced multiple historical challenges that have imposed difficulties for its construction as a nation, such as the territorial claims of its neighbors, and the economic dependency on monoculture and foreign resources. In response, Guyanese foreign policy was shaped as an instrument to ensure the survival of the country and to safeguard its independence and territorial integrity. Furthermore, when the House of State tried to adapt to the Cold War, dodging the superpowers and participating in the Non-Aligned Movement, it generated an unusual state of affairs for ‘such a small country’, a current Guyanese self-image.

In Guyanese-Brazilian relations in recent years there has been a broadening of the bilateral agenda in talks and in the further construction of dialogue, sprouting new hopes for integration projects. Georgetown has now sought to overcome its wary approach to Brazil, dissipating fears about “Brazilian gigantism”, which seemed an elephant that could inadvertently crush an ant.

In fact, it can be affirmed that Brazil is the country in South America that offers true hope for Guyana in terms of opportunities. The high capacity of Brazil to invest and maintain the growth of bilateral trade, without replicating the imperialist patterns of the great powers, will be directly proportional to the continental integration of Guyana.

In this sense, it is clear that Brazil-Guyana approximation is built on the different bases which have always existed: the possibility of Brazilian investments, complementary infrastructure projects such as dams, bridges and roads; the willingness of Brazil to offer Guyana, in a multi-polar order, neighborly solidarity with low costs and large mutual benefits; the feasibility of coming to Georgetown to correct the asymmetries, with special and differentiated treatment; and finally, the possibility of cooperating with Guyana in different areas, from security and defense to food production and energy; and modernized agricultural practices in food and bio-ethanol, a complement to the Guyanese tradition in the planting of sugar cane.



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