

Brazilian independence

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Brazilian Independence A critical review of " The Cambridge History of Latin America (From Independence to c. 1870), By Leslie Bethell In this paper I will explain and highlight main arguments of Brazilian independence according to Leslie Bethell. The Brazilian independence was certainly not as violent as in the other Latin American countries and the independence was a final product of many events and influences.

I will go through the economic situation Brazil was facing in terms of export and imports, followed by the installment of Portuguese Dom Joao in Rio de Janeiro, because of the Napoleon wars going on in Europe at the time and finally concluding on what finally gave Brazil independence in 1822. Economically, Brazil was major compared to its colonizer, Portugal. Brazil had the population the area and the natural resources to become a success, which they definitely was, but with a Portuguese exploitation of exports and population.

Portugal was highly dependent on Brazilian exports and had a hard time providing Brazil with manufactured goods, an element Britain had a major role in. Brazil exported and still exports massive amounts of sugar to Portugal and later on, coffee and cotton became an important export, not to forget gold from Minas Gerais. It was basically hard for Portugal to justify the occupation of this new land of opportunities. The creation of a national identity that would help Brazilians to gain independence was definitely an important factor to the process.

Some claim that the victory over the Dutch in 1654 was a major input and inspiration for the Brazilians. The Brazilian education and information system was although not on Brazilian territory and the minority of people that could

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afford it went to Europe for university. The economic, political and intellectual situation, led to massive criticisms due to the mercantile systems, its restrictions on trade, the heavy duty taxation on Brazil and also the high prices on manufactured goods were up for a beating.

The reason why Portugal was able to hold on to Brazil was not because of military power and high oppressiveness as seen in other Latin American countries under Spanish rule, but because of the Portuguese crown Dom Joao and Portugals supply of stability in Brazil. The dissatisfaction should although not be exaggerated - the locals where in comparison much more involved with the formation and implementation of legislation just to mention one and Portuguese settlement had happened gradual, so prominent landowners were most likely first generation Brazilians, giving less incentives for rebellion and riots.

All in all, Brazilians were better off than the other colonized countries in Latin America. Napoleon wars and moving Dom Joao With the Napoleon wars going on in Europe and many countries giving up their colonies, Brazil was kept in Portuguese hands. The Portuguese leader Dom Rodrigo de Sousa Coutinho, saw early on that Brazilian independence was just a matter of time. Therefore he suggested that regent Dom Joao should give up his residence in Portugal and move the apparatus to Brazil as a final option instead of being taken over by Napoleon.

On August 12th 1807 Napoleon issued an ultimatum to the Portuguese foreign minister, he could either; close the ports to British ships, imprison all English residents and confiscate their property or face a French invasion. Britain backed the idea of leaving Portugal up and offered protection. For a <https://assignbuster.com/brazilian-independence/>

while, Dom Joao tried to adopt anti-British policies, but already in November he learned that General Junot was marching on to Portugal with 23. 000 men. After the French troops entering Portugal Dom Joao made the decision of leaving Portugal.

In late November the regent and an apparatus of 10-15. 000 people left for Brazil accompanied with British ships. The moving of the regent to Rio de Janeiro was a huge step for Brazil and their way to independence and the relationship between Portugal and Brazil was better than ever. The establishment of government in Rio de Janeiro ended the monopoly for Lisbon as an actor on exports and imports. Portugal no longer controlled Brazilian products and trade and Britain was the only country allowed to trade with Brazil until the ending of the Napoleon wars.

The effects of having the regent in Rio de Janeiro, were great for Brazil. In 1808 the first printing press was published in Rio de Janeiro, furthermore books were released, libraries opened and probably most important; schools were opened which definitely contributed to the political awareness and intelligence. As a sum up on the movement, Brazil was now governed from Rio de Janeiro instead of Lisbon, and the relationship with Portugal was never really re-established. Later, after the liberation of Portugal, Dom Joao was expected back in Lisbon and British ships were sent to accompany they journey.

Although Dom Joao had other plans and decided to stay and later on raising the Brazil to the status of Kingdom - thereby being equal to Portugal legally. In response to the decreasing colonial power a liberal-nationalists opposition raised in Oporto and the Junta Provosoria was proposing a new constitution

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where the Cortes was to be elected for the Portuguese world. It became clear that the Portuguese intentions with Brazil were only to recapture Brazil and make it serve Portuguese interests. In general all the Portuguese attempts to lower the new status of Brazil and its political and economical opportunities were not successful.

Trying to re-impose the heavy taxation and tariffs on Brazil only gave the Brazilians and even bigger incentive to gain independence. Independence Dom Pedro (son of Dom Joao) was the one to lead the process of cutting all cooperation with Portugal since the elites of Brazil came to the conclusion that it was not an option to keep doing so. This resulted in a combined elite front of Brazilian politicians, no matter political ideologies, to battle the Cortes and they all swore allegiance to Dom Pedro.

Brazilian politicians gained more and more confidence and in 1822 Dom Pedro received the last dispatches from Portugal revoking his decrees, charging his ministers with treason and demanding him back to Lisbon, he declared; " I proclaim Brazil forevermore separated from Portugal". It although took some time to expel the last Portuguese men from Brazil. The Portuguese army ended up in Salvador, Bahia after being expelled from Rio de Janeiro. The Brazilian army was huge in terms of numbers but were not strong enough to overtake the Portuguese that consisted of 2. 00 regular troops and a 1. 500 men militia. The Portuguese had a major naval squadron stationed in Bahia, and therefore being in total control over the sea. Therefore Dom Pedro asked for the assistance of Lord Cochrane, a super successful frigate captain who had already played a major role in the independence of Chile in 1818. In 1823 Cochrane gathered a 9 ship Brazilian

naval squadron for the blockade of Bahia and it was probably more reputation than actual force that made the Portuguese evacuate Bahia on June 2nd. The last Portuguese troops left

Brazil in March 1824 and Cochrane afterwards went to Rio de Janeiro to receive the title of Marques de Maranhao. Conclusion: The Brazilian independence was as mentioned earlier a pallet of many events and actors influencing the Brazilian population as well as the Portuguese. Brazilian demography and population size was important, not to mention the British, who played a large role all the way as an external actor. The moving of the regent to Rio de Janeiro and the Cortes helpless attempt to regain the former status of Brazil was definitely another factor influencing.

Portugal as a nation was a declining European economy with trade deficits without Brazil. Also Brazil was not ruled by Portugal in the military way, and Portugal was only supplying the social stability in terms of a legal system. Therefore it makes no sense in itself for why Brazil should be ruled by a minor state compared to them selves. In my opinion the movement of the regent was one of the major events leading a much more joint operation and giving the Brazilians the local identity that led them to finally gaining independence in 1822.