



The Norfolk-Pará route: american steamships in the commerce between Brazil and the United States of America (1840-1860)

A rota Norfolk-Pará: paquetes a vapor estadunidenses no comércio entre o Brasil e os Estados Unidos da América (1840-1860)

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes commercial relations between Brazil and the United States from 1840 to 1860, focusing on American attempts to establish a steamship company on the Norfolk-Pará route. By examining correspondence and dispatches from the Brazilian consulate in Washington and New York, we observe the Imperial government's concern with creating national shipping companies, developing naval industries, and protecting against foreign encroachment. The study concludes that although the United States remained Brazil's primary coffee buyer throughout this period, the commercial relationship maintained an unfavorable imbalance for Brazil..

KEYWORDS: Bilateral Trade; Maritime Companies; Steamships.

RESUMO

O objetivo deste trabalho é mostrar uma aEste artigo analisa as relações comerciais entre Brasil e Estados Unidos no período 1840-1860, com ênfase nas tentativas norte-americanas de implantar uma companhia de vapores na rota Norfolk-Pará. Analisando os ofícios e despachos do corpo consular brasileiro em Washington e Nova York, observa-se a preocupação do governo Imperial em criar companhias nacionais de embarcações, desenvolver a indústria naval e se proteger das investidas estrangeiras. Conclui-se que, embora os Estados Unidos fossem o maior comprador do café brasileiro durante todo o período, a relação comercial ainda mantinha um desequilíbrio desfavorável ao Brasil..

PALAVRAS_CHAVE: Comércio Bilateral; Companhias Marítimas; Navio a Vapor.

INTRODUCTION

The research presented here examines aspects of diplomacy and trade with the United States during the period known as the consolidation of the Brazilian nation-state, from 1840 to 1860. The consolidation of the nation-state was the central axis of the internal political process of the Brazilian Empire throughout the 19th century. On the external front, the Empire sought commercial partnerships that would strengthen its trade balance, thereby supporting this consolidation process. One such ally in this context was the United States, which became the largest buyer of Brazilian coffee by mid-century.

In this study, we analyze the North American initiative to promote a packet company with a route to Brazil. This action fits within a broader context of numerous other initiatives aimed at increasing profits in trade with Brazil, such as the proposal to ratify a new Treaty of Commerce and Friendship and the opening of the Amazon River to free navigation. At the time, the Empire faced a series of external attempts to access and navigate the rivers of the Amazon basin, driven by the rhetoric of 'enlightened' liberalism, which promoted the principles of free trade and unrestricted transit across the globe¹.

These topics were discussed in diplomatic spheres and proved important enough to their agents that they were brought to a higher level, the Council of State, to issue opinions that could guide the Empire's foreign policy. The discussions encompassed legal aspects pertaining to Brazil and the world, considering the histories of other nations and looking to decisions from more developed countries to support the Empire's internal deliberations.

This research considers the existence of a planned tightening of Brazil's

commercial relations with the United States since at least the opening of Brazilian ports to friendly nations in 1808, when direct trade with North America became possible, and especially following the alignment with the conservative Regresso policy centered on coffee and slavery—the main axes connecting the Brazilian economy to the North American one. Celso, when discussing 19th-century Brazilian politics, stated that "it would be difficult to impose an idea that did not correspond to the reality of dominant interests" (FURTADO, 2003, p. 95). Since coffee and slavery were matters of interest to the nation's leaders, moving closer to the United States was an idea embraced by many Brazilian politicians and merchants, securing agro-export interests. It is thus assumed that the relationship between the two countries can be seen as the result of deliberate governmental intention.

The 1840s, in particular, were a time of internal changes to meet the new demands of the international situation, with a new economy being articulated to sustain Atlantic demand. In other words, state-building was linked to processes external to the Empire. Juliana Jardim Oliveira argued that, in the second half of the 19th century, "... ideological, political, and economic disputes were at play, integrated around the world but primarily in the Atlantic and Western world." (OLIVEIRA, 2017, p. 17).

Mastery of foreign relations was a point of importance for 19th-century Brazilian diplomacy. In this study, we approach foreign policy as a field of state action that coordinates governmental directives of a state in relation to other governments, states, regions, and power structures, within specific historical contexts. This policy can be conflictive or cooperative and is part of a global system that, as a

whole, constitutes international politics (Visentini, 2020). Martin Wight (2002), a theorist of International Relations, considers that diplomacy "(...) is the system and art of communication between states. The diplomatic system is the master institution of international relations." (WIGHT, 2002, p. 107). In other words, diplomacy can be considered the tool used by states to manage their foreign policy.

The documentation used here to discuss the proposal of the Packet Company included, therefore, official dispatches and letters from the Brazilian consulate general in New York and the Brazilian Legation in Washington, which sent communications to the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs in Rio de Janeiro (and vice versa) to improve this commercial relationship.

Initially, we observed a disparity in the volume of voyages made by Brazilian and American vessels on this route, based on data extracted from commercial reports by the Consul General in New York. These reports were sent to the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs in Rio de Janeiro at the end of each fiscal year and contained statistical data on that trade. Next, we examined the proposal to create an American Steamship Company, considering it an attempt to establish a close commercial relationship with Brazil.

FLAGS IN THE TRADE BETWEEN BRAZIL AND THE UNITED STATES

The history of navigation in Brazil since the early 19th century has been marked by attempts and challenges widely discussed in historiography (GOULARTI FILHO, 2011; TELLES, 2001; CAMINHA, 1980). Our objective, however, is not to revisit the development, or underdevelopment, of the merchant marine and river commerce in the Brazilian Empire. The focus is to highlight a specific aspect of this relation-

ship: trade with the United States, whose ships dominated transportation between the two countries, especially in the export of Brazilian coffee.

Throughout the 19th century, the United States attempted to obtain negotiations with the Imperial government that would economically favor them. The proposal to inaugurate a steamship company from Norfolk, Virginia, to Pará, Brazil, was one among many offered to Brazilian diplomatic agents, who often delayed responses or outright refused them, understanding that, given the Empire's economic structure where the main revenue came from imports, they needed to ensure that fiscal revenue would not be harmed by unequal agreements.

After the opening of ports to friendly nations in 1808, D. João VI enacted a decree granting the incorporation of a steam navigation company in the captaincy of Bahia, taking the first steps in this field. Marcos Sampaio (2006) considered that this initiative was not long-lasting due to the lack of investments and government incentives. Only in 1837, with the emergence of the Brazilian Steam Packet Company, did steam navigation gain significant momentum, establishing a northern route connecting the Court to Belém do Pará and a southern route reaching Montevideo, Uruguay. However, as noted by Sampaio, English dominance in steamship technology restricted its use mainly to cabotage and navigation in rivers and lakes, hindering its application in the transatlantic slave trade, which faced strong English pressure to be abolished. In any case, steam navigation contributed to the development of the Brazilian economy, speeding up contacts and exchanges, even if exports were not conducted through steamships of national companies (SAMPAIO, 2006, p. 38).

Although steam navigation still faced limitations, its consolidation in the national scenario was driven by economic policies, such as the Alves Branco Tariff of 1844, which created a more favorable environment for these ventures, indirectly benefiting steam navigation. By seeking to increase the country's fiscal revenues, it protected and encouraged industrial development, resulting in eighteen companies organized throughout Brazil in the decade before the end of the slave trade. From 1850 onward, the Bahia and Amazonas Company would be created in 1852; the Pernambuco Company in 1853; the Espírito Santo Company in 1854; the Intermediate Company in 1855; the Maranhão Company in 1856; and the Alto Paraguá Company in 1859 (SARAIVA, 2024, p. 129).

The United States, on the other hand, were pioneers in steam navigation and transatlantic voyages. In 1819, they made a voyage from New York to Liverpool (SPARTT, 1947). Although the engine operated for only three days, the vessel completed the crossing using sails during the remaining 29 days. Despite this pioneering effort, the total number of steamships was considered insignificant compared to the total number of sailing ships they possessed—about ten times fewer. Moreover, there was no investment in improving the vessels, which allowed England to take the lead in the expansion and development of transportation from the mid-19th century onward (SAMPALIO, 2006, pp. 22-23).

During the 1840s, Brazilian leaders were already discussing the tax losses they suffered in this commercial relationship, particularly concerning transportation. In 1843, the Brazilian minister in Washington, in an official letter to the Secretariat in Rio de Janeiro, called attention to the disproportionality between the Brazilian and American merchant ma-

rines, pointing out the U.S. government's concern with the shipbuilding and naval traffic sector. In this letter, Gaspar José Lisboa responded to Honório Hermeto Carneiro Leão, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, about the best way to facilitate commercial operations, while avoiding opening doors to smuggling. He noted that it was customary for the U.S. government to deploy armed vessels to patrol the coasts near anchorages and bays to prevent smuggling and suggested that Brazil should follow the same path.

Two years later, in 1845, Luiz Henrique Ferreira de Aguiar, the consul general in New York, sent an official letter to Gaspar José Lisboa with information about the fees imposed on vessels in American ports, as well as details on the cost of merchant shipbuilding. According to the consul, no tonnage, pilotage, lighthouse, or any other fees were charged to Brazilian ships by the federal government because they had the same privileges as American ships, although each state in the Federation had its own regulatory laws for the ports in their districts, which led to the collection of pilotage fees. In these states, the fees varied according to the vessel's draft. For example, in Boston, ships entering during the period from May to November of that year would pay a minimum of \$1.10 for up to nine feet of draft, gradually increasing to \$3 for 22 feet or more. Upon departure, they would pay 75 cents for up to nine feet, increasing to \$2.25 for up to twelve feet (AHI Washington 235/1/16).

In the port of New York, the "harbour-master" received fees of 1.5 cents per ton for ships arriving from foreign ports; some other American ports also charged tonnage duties ranging from two to four cents. These charges were applied to American-flagged ships and those from nations that had ratified commercial treaties with

the U.S. For countries without agreements, these charges were higher (AHI Washington 235/1/16).

According to the data in the letter, the cost of merchant shipbuilding in the U.S. ranged from \$40 to \$54 per ton, and the cost of the hull and rigging after the ship was completed was around \$23to \$29. The consul noted in the letter that these values depended on the cost of materials, the wages of the builders, and the manner in which they were constructed, causing the values to fluctuate. According to him, the average lifespan of a ship was twelve to twenty years, with some lasting up to thirty years, depending again on the materials, construction, the trade in which it was employed, and the good manage-

ment and direction of the captains. The payment of the latter ranged from \$50 to \$100 per month, depending on the size of the ship and the venture undertaken; that of the mates was \$20 to \$30; of the sailors, \$12 to \$16; and of the cabin boys, \$5 to \$10 per month, according to their ability (AHI Washington 235/1/16).

All this information illustrated to the ministers how much the United States typically earned from its dominance over the trade route to Brazil. The table below indicates the nationality of vessels that entered or left Brazilian ports for American ports, and vice versa, during the period from 1840 to 1859.

Table 1 - Nationality of vessels entering/ departing Brazilian and U.S. ports, 1840–

1859

Year	American*	Brazilian	English	Portuguese	Total
1840	1				1
1841	201	2			203
1842	352		2		354
1843	399	1	3		403
1844	401		5		406
1845	403	4			407
1846	107	5	1	1	114
1847	67	22	1	8	98
1848	300	15	1		316
1849	397	8			405
1850	123	1	1		125
1851	36				36
1852	12				12
1853	7				7
1854	13				13
1855	38				38
1856	7				7
1858	148	1	2		151
1859	192	4	2		198
Total	3222	63	21	9	3315

Data extracted from the database compiled from Itamaraty-RJ archives.
*Note: "American" refers to U.S. vessels. The original documental designation has been preserved.

The predominance of the United States in vessel ownership is undeniable, even for the years of the 1850s when the number of vessels decreased drastically. In April 1852, Luiz Pereira Sodré, chargé d'affaires in Washington, wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Paulino José Soares de Souza, about the general state of trade between the two nations during the period from July 1, 1850, to June 30, 1851, and pointed out the nationality of the ships used on this route:

286 ships — 255 of them American — departed the United States for Brazil during this period, while 344 vessels (261 American) entered U.S. ports from Brazil. Brazilian ships accounted for merely 9 arrivals and 8 departures: 5 came directly from Brazil (with an equal number returning), 1 from the British WestIndies, 1 from the Cisplatine Republic, and 2 from Chile. Departures included 1 bound for the Cisplatine Republic, 1 for Chile, and 1 for Peru (AHI Washington, 233/3/3).

This excerpt shows figures different from those in Table 1, but reaffirms the American predominance in owning the transports that conducted trade between the countries – in that fiscal year, there were 255 American vessels operating on that route while Brazil had only eight. Sodré further highlighted that the United States had a greater number of steamships than England, totaling 1,400 against 1,100, and that an American senator had proven in a Senate meeting, "with statistics in hand," that the United States possessed more steamships than all of Europe combined, which totaled around 1,200.

Indeed, the United States maintained a greater quantity of steamships than England until the 1860s. From then on, in 1870 for example, England already had 1,202,000 tons of steamships in contrast to the 192,000 of the Americans (SAMPAIO,

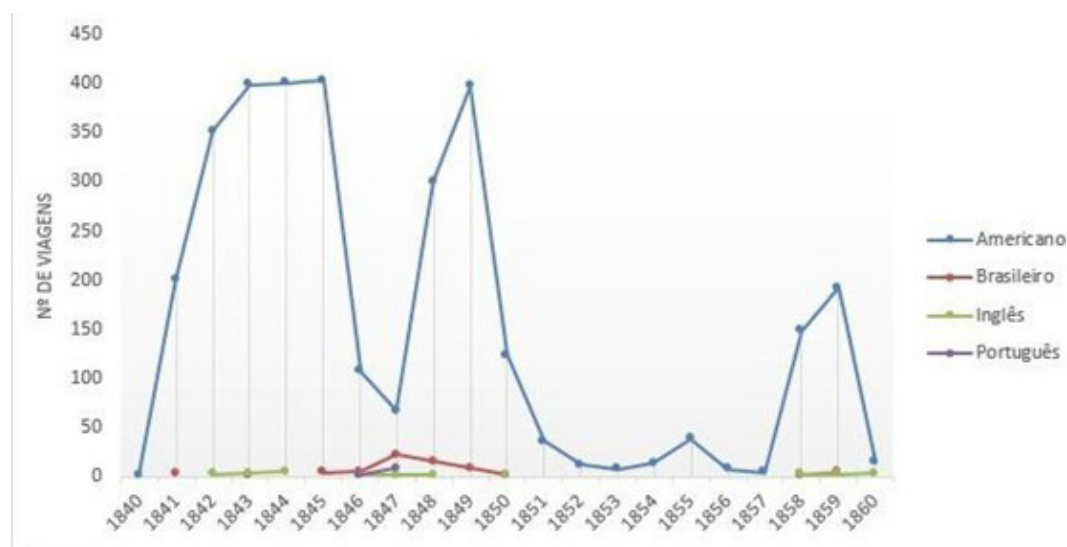


Chart 1 - Nationality of vessels entering/departing Brazilian and U.S. ports (1840-1860). Source: Bd_Ita database.

2006, p. 25).

Vessel ownership was not Brazil's sole concern, as the U.S. also boasted a far more developed shipbuilding indus-

try. Sodré's report indicated that 1,357 ships (including 233 steamships, totaling 298,000 tons) had been constructed in the

U.S. during 1850-1851.

Brazil's shipbuilding efforts, initiated in 18th-century naval arsenals, fluctuated between intense activity and near-abandonment throughout the following century. Though the *Arsenal da Marinha* in Rio employed 1,898 shipyard workers by 1850 (GOULARTI FILHO, 2011), domestically built vessels rarely participated in international trade.

PROPOSAL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NEW STEAMSHIP COMPANY

A few months after the dispatch of Sodré's report, the same Brazilian Legation in Washington sent an official letter with considerations about the establishment of a steamship company, in which it was stated that the legislature of the State of Virginia had granted the privilege of establishing a line from Norfolk to Pará. Norfolk was a city in the State of Virginia, a strong commercial center of the slaveholding South of the United States. The province of Pará was where the entrance to the Amazon River was located, an object of much dispute and covetousness by the United States during that century.

According to the official letter sent from the Legation in Washington, the company considered itself formed, with captains ready for navigation, and requested a subsidy from the U.S. Congress. The Legation was then asked to have the Imperial government grant the same exemptions and

privileges that had been given to the English Southampton Company in the port of Rio de Janeiro, and to pay the sum of \$10,000 per voyage, or half of the shares that the Brazilian Post Office would receive from the correspondence brought and received in Pará by the North American line.

The Brazilian chargé d'affaires in Washington described aspects he considered important to weigh regarding the establishment of the company, such as the increase in trade between Brazil and the United States annually (around 29 thousand *contos de réis*) and, principally, the average duration of a voyage between the United States and Rio de Janeiro. Considering that a sailing ship took 45 to 50 days to complete this route, the need for greater speed through steamships was considered, which took 12 days from New York to Liverpool, 29 days from Southampton to Rio, that is, around 41 or 42 days from New York or Washington to Rio de Janeiro, including one or two days for embarkation/disembarkation and the overland trip to Southampton, as the English Company did (route in Figure 1).

Expanding modern society demanded not only speed in transport but also punctuality. Steamships could bring greater regularity to commerce and communication between the countries, in addition to having greater cargo capacity. But while on one hand they would provide greater safety, which would reduce insurance costs, on the other hand they had high construction costs and freight rates higher than those of



Figure 1 - Route taken by the English Steamship Company from the United States to Rio de Janeiro, passing through England. Map of the steamship route made by MarineTraffic, a maritime analysis provider developed as an academic project by the University of the Aegean, Greece, in 2007.

sailing ships (SAMPAIO, 2006, p. 27).

The American steamship line proposed by the entrepreneurs would thus fulfill this objective of reducing travel time, ensuring better communication between the countries. The route would go from Norfolk, passing through Puerto Rico and arriving in Pará in 12 days. From Pará to Rio in another 12, and from there to England in another 12 days, totaling 36 days of travel (Map 2). The proposal aimed to join the Brazilian steamship line, which went from Pará to other ports, with

the American one, which would go from the U.S. to Pará. In this way, Brazil could establish competitive opposition to the English line, which connected Southampton to Rio, forcing them to lower their prices for mail, passages, and freight. The chargé d'affaires clarified that they could also profit from European and American correspondence with the Río de la Plata republics, which would be transported by Brazilian steamships from Montevideo to Rio in conjunction with the Rio-Pará line, and on the North American

line from Pará to the U.S.

The proposed American steamship

line would thus fulfill this objective of reducing travel time, ensuring better com-



Figure 2 - Proposed route of the North American Steamship Company, from the United States to England, passing through Rio de Janeiro. Map of the steamship route created by MarineTraffic, a maritime analysis provider developed as an academic project by the University of the Aegean, Greece, in 2007.

munication between the countries.

All these considerations aimed to clarify points of advantage or disadvantage in creating the steamship line for the Brazilian Empire. The opinion of the chargé d'affaires in Washington was that the establishment of the Company would be advantageous because, in addition to shortening the distance between the two countries, it would facilitate migratory flows from Germany and Ireland, which, according to his calculations, would be 24 or 25 days away from Pará. Despite this advantage, he viewed with concern the request for \$10,000 per voyage and the Company's desire that the steamships be built with the possibility of being armed, in case of war.

In November of the same year, the chargé d'affaires sent another official

letter stating that the establishment of a steamship line would be inevitable, especially with the initiative of the American Congress, which would encourage greater commercial flows between the countries of America. He also noted that he did not assume that this Company's project had interests in the Amazon River, because the consul-general had informed him that there was already a constant navigation of small merchant ships maintained between the United States and the ports of Maranhão and Pará, making such a route perhaps not new to the Americans.

Seven years later, in 1859, the secretary of the Brazilian Legation in Washington, Harmodio de T. M. de Montezuma, wrote to José Maria da Silva Paranhos about letters received regarding "a projected line" of steamship packets between Brazil and

the U.S. The first of these had been written by Mr. James D. Stevenson, who declared himself a lawyer and representative of a New York company with capital of one and a half million dollars, intending to establish steam communication between that city and Rio de Janeiro (AHI Washington Ofícios, 233/3/9).

Others interested in the same matter were Mr. John Gardner, who had been a merchant in Rio for many years and intended to establish a line to Rio de Janeiro and a subsidiary line for service to the Río de la Plata; and Mr. Thomaz Rainey, who had made several trips to various Brazilian ports and was committed to establishing a North American line that would go to Pará and connect there to the south with the Brazilian packet line. There was also a letter written by Kidder & Hetcher, which detailed Rainey's efforts toward this goal. These men awaited responses so they could begin the packet service as soon as they obtained a subsidy from the U.S. Government, without which they deemed the enterprise impossible (AHI Washington Ofícios, 233/3/9).

First, they sought Counselor Cavalcante to communicate their ideas and the steps they had taken with the U.S. legislative body. Mr. Rainey's project was the first to be submitted to Congress, and although no decision had been made by that time, the committees presented favorable opinions. The secretary explained that, since the U.S. government had not yet authorized subsidies for any of the requesting companies, the new New York company was seeking to obtain in Brazil the assistance that "in the United States are difficult, at least for now, given the financial state of the country." In making this explanation, he attached a printed document that Mr. Gardner had published about his own company, demonstrating

that there might be some plausibility to the idea that the Brazilian government could offer subsidies for the project (AHI Washington Ofícios, 233/3/9).

That year, Miguel Maria Lisboa had just arrived in Washington as Brazil's representative to the U.S. He had been secretary of the Brazilian legation in Chile in 1838 and in Venezuela in 1842, plenipotentiary minister in Bolivia in 1851, and went on a special mission through Venezuela, New Granada (present-day Colombia), and Ecuador between 1852 and 1855 to negotiate navigation treaties and territorial boundaries, where he saw abolitionist laws passed during that period. Alain El Youssef (2017) analyzed his trajectory and pointed out that Lisboa had witnessed firsthand the reach of the economic interests of England and the United States over America, noticing how they influenced local politicians to strengthen their commercial ties with countries in the region. Lisboa's experience in South American countries, years before arriving in Washington, would have provided him with knowledge about the global economy of tropical commodities, as well as the global geopolitics of slavery and the international isolation being imposed on Brazil at that time.

In October 1859, in the absence of a response from the Imperial government, Stevenson sought out Miguel Maria Lisboa, who gave his personal opinion on the packet matter and pointed out aspects of the project that would be difficult for the Brazilian government to accept, such as exclusive privilege, compensation for mail transport, and exemption from certain port duties. According to him, there was no doubt that the Brazilian government would provide the American company with the same protection and favors it gave to the steamships of the English West Indies

Company. There would be great difficulty in obtaining from the Chambers anything resembling a subsidy in favor of a foreign company while there were national companies that needed protection from the Imperial government. Still, Mr. Stevenson expressed his intention to register his ships as Brazilian. However, he was informed that this process would not be as simple as he imagined, as the nationalization of vessels in Brazil would be subject to laws incompatible with the foundations of his project (AHI Washington Ofícios, 233/3/9).

Another official letter notes that Mr. Stevenson approached Miguel Maria Lisboa once more to clarify other points. He explained that the company intended to create the packet line would be composed of seven individuals interested in trade between Brazil and the United States. These individuals were driven by the advantages that direct trade would bring, and one of the pillars of their operations was the freight charged for transporting precious metals. This freight, according to Stevenson, should generate considerable profits, since the trade balance between the two countries favored Brazil, with the difference being remitted in gold to the Empire. Additionally, Stevenson mentioned that he was not inclined to sign a contract with the Postmaster General, preferring to request a subsidy from Congress (AHI Washington Ofícios, 233/3/9).

Two days after this conversation, Lisboa reported being invited by the U.S. Postmaster General, Mr. Holt, to a conference. During the meeting, he was questioned about the veracity of the information that Stevenson had already reached an agreement with the Imperial government. Holt explained that the U.S. Post Office had previously denied Stevenson a contract because they believed he was

unreliable due to his failure to pay fines on a previous occasion, which gave a "bad impression of the company." This detail caught Lisboa's attention, who considered the matter "not to be overlooked" and that it should be treated with caution (AHI Washington Ofícios, 233/3/9).

In November 1859, Mr. Stevenson made another attempt by writing a long letter addressed to Lisboa, detailing every occasion he had tried to contact the Brazilian government since January of that year and claiming to have a contract with the Post Office Department for sending mail from New York to the Caribbean island of São Tomás, to Pernambuco, Bahia, and Rio de Janeiro, in an attempt to demonstrate his experience in the business despite what Mr. Holt had communicated to Lisboa at the conference (AHI Washington Ofícios, 233/3/9).

In this letter, he asked for the Imperial government's protection for the packet line because it would bring benefits to trade between Brazil and the United States, which at that time was rising to millions of dollars annually. Beyond that, he considered the existence of an affinity between the countries that should be taken into account for the establishment of the line:

(...) laying aside the natural affinity that two countries the same quarter of the globe should have towards each other, whose history is some what similar, both having been colonies of an European nation, and both nearly contemporary in birth (AHI Washington Ofícios, 233/3/9).

The argument of affinity between the nations referred to a shared historical value, in which both shared legacies of European colonization, despite the unmentioned political-economic disparity. For him, there was no reason for the United States not to be as connected with Bra-

zil as other countries were, as this was an inevitable demand of commerce. He observed that Brazil accepted ideas that would bring wealth to the nation and increase its commercial importance, just as the United States did, and therefore he hoped that the U.S. government would take corresponding measures to enhance commercial relations. He believed that "in the peaceful walks of commerce will join together in the successful establishing of any enterprises that will attain the desired result" (AHI Washington Ofícios, 233/3/9), understanding that the success of bilateral trade depended on mutual efforts.

Despite these efforts, the Company did not obtain the privileges of the Imperial government. Only in 1866 would a similar initiative be completed with the creation of the United States and Brazil Mail Steam Ship, a mixed-capital company that began operating in the coastal trade after it ceased to be a national monopoly in 1860.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In summary, this article explored an aspect of commercial relations between Brazil and the United States within the context of 19th-century merchant navigation. By examining attempts at economic integration, the American desire to draw closer to Brazil and establish tight commercial connections becomes evident. On the Brazilian side, we observe a refusal to commit to business arrangements that would not directly increase fiscal revenue, mirroring their rejection of a new treaty ratification with the United States (VAZ, 2022) to secure tariffs that could be freely modified without treaty obligations.

The power dynamic between the two countries oscillated between pursuing close partnership (with mutual benefits) and resisting external proposals that

would primarily advantage the stronger nation—the United States. The Brazil-U.S. Relationship displayed certain ambiguity in the American context: while both nations were viewed as the region's strongest, a clear power asymmetry existed, with the United States exercising predominance over Brazil. Imperial foreign policy aimed to establish long-term parameters for national consolidation through international partnerships, particularly those boosting domestic profits.

Regarding the Steam Packet Company, greater Imperial government attention to port traffic was expected, especially given rising import/export flows since the century's beginning. This sector, with developmental potential, could generate significant fiscal income for the Crown. However, the commercial balance favored the United States, as most transit occurred on American vessels that profited from freight while benefiting from Brazilian port tax exemptions. Conversely, though Brazilian ships were exempt from U.S. federal taxes, they still paid state port fees governed by local laws. To Brazilian politicians, this represented a theoretically fair but practically disadvantageous commercial relationship. Consequently, since at least the century's start, governmental spheres had debated establishing national navigation companies to stimulate industry and thereby consolidate the nation-building project envisioned by leaders.

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NOTAS

¹ For discussion of the opening of the river and international attempts, see: PALM, Paulo Roberto. *A abertura do rio Amazonas à navegação internacional e o parlamento brasileiro*. Brasília: Fundação Alexandre de Gusmão, 2009; MAURY, F. *O Amazonas e as costas atlânticas da América Meridional*. Rio de Janeiro: Typographia de M. Barreto, 1853; JUNQUEIRA, Mary A. Ciência, técnica e as expedições da marinha de guerra norteamericana, *U.S. Navy*, em direção à América Latina (1838-1901). *Varia Historia*, Belo Horizonte, vol. 23, nº 38, pp.334-349, 2007.