

Guyana-Venezuela border conflicts of the Essequibo region of Guyana and the treaties

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Introduction

In the past and also recently Venezuela have made claims to Essequibo in Guyana. In 2015 when the Exxon, Hess, and CNOOC oil explorations commenced, Venezuela once again began making claims for the Essequibo region, as the oil companies explorations continued. In 2023 the President of Venezuela made statements that they will annex Essequibo and they created a new map with Essequibo being a part of Venezuela. Recently it was written that "Guyana could become the Monaco for Latin America" (Ref 1). So we know that Guyana is doing very well.

The question is does Venezuela or Spain even have any valid claims over Essequibo?

In a comment made by someone, he stated that the Guyanese are swatting on Venezuela's land. Then, one can ask, are the Spanish squatting on indigenous lands? Spain made claims to lands just by sighting them when the Indigenous people were living on those lands? Does that mean that the Spanish are squatting on other people's land? Is it okay for Spain and not for others? Let's look history going back all the way to the 1500s to see if Spain or Venezuela have any legitimate claims to the Essequibo region of Guyana.

The border issues between Venezuela were already settled back in 1899, and once again in 1966.

Section I - Before the Europeans made claims to Essequibo, the Indigenous people were living in the area

The following was retrieved from Wikipedia on 12/14/23: **‘Before the arrival of European colonials, the Guianas were populated by scattered bands of native people.** The Warao people are considered to be the first inhabitants of Guyana, followed by the Arawak and Carib people. The native tribes of the Northern Amazon are most closely related to the natives of the Caribbean; most evidence suggests that the Arawaks immigrated from the Orinoco and Essequibo River Basins in Venezuela and Guiana into the northern islands, and were then supplanted by more warlike tribes of Carib Indians, who departed from these same river valleys a few centuries later.

The question is, do others have the right to just site your land or to even carry out some exploration on that land, as in the case of the Spaniards, and then claim that land belongs to them even though others were already there living and carrying out business?

Section II - Spain claims of lands in the 15th century

The follow information in this section was retrieved on 12/14/23, 7:23 PM Guayana Esequiba - Wikipedia, Guayana Esequiba.

15th century

In 1499, the Spaniards explored Essequibo

‘The first European encounter of the region was by the ships of Juan de Esquivel, deputy of Don Diego Columbus, son of Christopher Columbus, in 1498. **The region was named after Esquivel. In 1499, Amerigo Vespucci and Alonso de Ojeda explored the mouths of the Orinoco, and reportedly were the first Europeans to explore the Essequibo.**

As stated above, two Spaniards explored the mouth of the Orinoco, so does that mean they have rights to that land? Did the people of the land gave Spain the rights to claim their land and to give their land their own name Spanish name? We can all agree that the Indigenous people were living on that land carrying out their lives from day to day. Did other Europeans accept Spain’s claim to the Essequibo region?

Section III - The Treaty of Tordesillas was not signed nor recognized by other colonialists

From https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guayana_Esequiba 2/28; retrieved 12/14/23, 7:38 PM Guayana Esequiba - Wikipedia’ states: ‘Before other European powers had made

excursions into these lands, Spain had already declared ownership of this region, **as per the Treaty of Tordesillas. The treaty was not signed nor recognized by other colonialists, such as the Dutch or the English** who inserted themselves into the Guianas between areas claimed by the Spanish Empire and Portuguese Empire.

Does it mean that because Spain had already declared ownership that they were exploring, living and trading in that area. That's not the case. The area is all jungle and the Spanish were not living in the Essequibo region.

Section IV - Soon after the Dutch was in the Essequibo region

Note that Spain had made claims in 1499 to Essequibo region, but they did not start any colonies in that area. Indigenous colonies were already in that area, living under their own rule. Shortly after Spain made its claims, the Dutch arrived in the 1500s into the Essequibo region and had made connections with the Indigenous people and or also or traded with them. Maybe the Indigenous people allowed the Dutch in the area to live amongst them and to even explore. The Dutch would also expand their sugar plantations into Essequibo forming Dutch colonies; it's obvious that the Spaniards were not in that area forming colonies.

In 1581, on the banks of the Pomeroon River, Dutch colonists from Zeeland established a trading post and were colonizing the land situated west of the Essequibo. The Pomeroon colony was incorporated into the Essequibo colony and would become a major destination for trade for the Dutch colonialists before control was transferred to the British.

The Spaniards were not living in the Essequibo region. They did not start colonies in the area? The Treaty of Tordesillas were not recognized nor signed by the Dutch, British and others and not long after, the Dutch commenced their work in Essequibo.

Section V - Development in the Essequibo by the Dutch commenced in the 1500s

16th century

According to Wikipedia: 'Dutch colonisation of the Guianas occurred primarily between the mouths of the Orinoco River in the west and the Amazon River to the east. Their presence in the Guianas was noted by the late 1500s, though many documents of early Dutch discoveries in the region were destroyed. The Dutch were present as far west as the Araya Peninsula in Venezuela utilizing salt pans in the area. **By the 1570s, it was reported that the Dutch were commencing trade in the Guianas, but little evidence of this exists.** At the time, neither the Portuguese nor the Spanish had made any establishments in the area. A Dutch fort was built in 1596 at the mouth of the Essequibo

River on an island, which was destroyed by the Spanish later that year.’

According to Wikipedia: ‘In 1597, Dutch interest in travelling to the Guianas became common following the publication of *The Discovery of Guiana* by Sir Walter Raleigh. On 3 December 1597, a Dutch expedition left Brielle and travelled the coasts between the Amazon and Orinoco. The report, written by A. Cabeljau and described as having "more realistic information about the region" than that of Raleigh, showed how the Dutch had travelled the Orinoco and Caroní River, discovering dozens of rivers and other previously unknown lands. Cabeljau wrote of good relations with the natives and that the Spanish were friendly when they encountered them in San Tomé. By 1598, Dutch ships frequented Guiana to establish settlements.’

The Dutch and English never accepted Spain’s treaty. The Dutch arrived soon after and commenced it’s development, while the Spanish were in other places with their colonies. Thus how could one even claim that Essequibo belongs to Spain and Venezuela, when there were no colonies in Essequibo under Spain. Could it even be possible that the Dutch made their own treaties with the indigenous people that were accepted by the Indigenous people? The indigenous people in that area worked with the Dutch, and not with the Spaniards.

Thus one would think that the Dutch have the rights to this area, even though Spain sighted the land and drew up a treaty, which the Dutch and others did not recognize. Spain commenced their colonies in places like Columbia and Venezuela, but not in the Essequibo region. Thus one may think that because these settlements began very early after Spain’s treaty, and that these developments continued by the Dutch for a few centuries that the claims under the Dutch is valid, and that Venezuela or Spain really does not have any claims to the Essequibo region. It’s written that the Dutch had already established a trading post in Essequibo in 1581. It is noted that the Dutch commenced development much earlier than 1581.

Section VI - The Dutch colony, Essequibo

Retrieved from Wikipedia on 12/14/23, 7:02 PM Essequibo (colony), states: ‘Essequibo (Dutch: *Kolonie Essequibo*, [[][koˈloni ɛsəˈkʋebo][]]) was a Dutch colony in the Guianas and later a county on the Essequibo River in the Guiana region on the north coast of South America. It was a colony of the Dutch West India Company between 1616 and 1792 and a colony of the Dutch state from 1792 until 1815. **It was merged with Demerara in 1812 by the British who took control. It formally became a British colony in 1815 until Demerara-Essequibo was merged with Berbice to form the colony of British Guiana in 1831. In 1838, it became a county of British Guiana till 1958.** In 1966, British Guiana gained independence as Guyana and in 1970 it became a republic as the Co-operative Republic of Guyana. It was located around the lower course of the Demerara River, and its main settlement was Georgetown.’

Section VII - Border disputes - Peace of Amiens (1802)

Border disputes - the info was retrieved from Wikipedia on 12/14/23, 7:02 PM

‘At the Peace of Amiens (1802), the Netherlands received the Essequibo colony for a short time, from 1802 to 1803, but after that the British again occupied it during the Napoleonic Wars. In 1812 Stabroek was renamed by the British as Georgetown. Essequibo became official British territory on 13 August 1814 as part of the Treaty of London and was merged with the colony of Demerara.’

‘But it also became involved in one of Latin America's most persistent border disputes because the new colony had the Essequibo river as its west border with the Spanish Captaincy General of Venezuela. Although Spain still claimed the region, the Spanish did not contest the treaty because they were preoccupied with their own colonies' struggles for independence.’

As seen above, the Spanish was not colonized by the Venezuela, but by the Dutch for hundreds of years already. The Spanish had no time for Essequibo. As seen in the information above, the Dutch was recognized the ‘Peace of Amiens’ for the Essequibo colony. Thus others have accepted the Essequibo as being under Dutch rule instead of a colony of Spain or Venezuela very early on.

Section VIII - 1899 Paris Arbitral Award

According from Wikipedia retrieved o 12/14/23, 7:38 PM Guayana Esequiba: ‘Guayana Esequiba (Spanish pronunciation: [gwaˈjana eseˈkiβa] —), also called Esequibo or Essequibo, is a disputed territory of 159,500 km² (61,600 sq mi) west of the Essequibo River. **The territory is controlled by Guyana based on the 1899 Paris Arbitral Award but is also claimed by Venezuela.** The boundary dispute was inherited from the colonial powers (Spain in the case of Venezuela, and the Netherlands and the United Kingdom in the case of Guyana) and has persisted following the independence of Venezuela and Guyana.’

‘In 1840, the British government commissioned German-born explorer and naturalist Robert Hermann Schomburgk to survey British Guiana's boundaries. This survey resulted in what came to be known as the "Schomburgk Line", which went well beyond the area of British occupation and gave British Guiana control of the mouth of the Orinoco River. **These borders were disputed by Venezuela, and tensions worsened after the discovery of gold mines in the region in 1876,** culminating with Venezuela severing diplomatic relations with the United Kingdom in 1887. **The United Kingdom and Venezuela went into arbitration with mediation from the United States, which resulted in the Paris Arbitral Award in 1899 and ruled largely in favour of Britain.** In 1949, a memorandum written by Severo Mallet-Prevost, official secretary of the US–Venezuela delegation in the arbitration, and published posthumously stated that the Arbitral Award resulted from the pressure by the Tribunal President

Friedrich Martens and a political deal between Russia and Britain. Said memorandum led to complaints by Venezuela in the United Nations in 1962, which resulted in the Geneva Agreement, signed with the United Kingdom in 1966.’

As stated above, when gold mines were discovered in the Essequibo region in 1876 tension about Essequibo worsened. But the fact remains that Spain just sighting the area and drawing up a treaty in 1499 was not accepted by the Dutch, the English and others. Nor did Spain or Venezuela commenced any development or colonies in Essequibo, where as the Dutch did very early on.

Wikipediat states: **‘The status of the territory is subject to the Geneva Agreement, which was signed by the United Kingdom, Venezuela, and British Guiana on 17 February 1966.** This treaty stipulates that the parties will agree to find a practical, peaceful, and satisfactory solution to the dispute. Should there be a stalemate, according to the treaty, the decision as to the means of settlement is to be referred to an "appropriate international organ" or, failing agreement on this point, to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The Secretary-General referred the entire matter to the International Court of Justice.’

Regardless of what the above section says, Spain’s original treaty in 1499 was not recognized and shortly after it was the Dutch that were accepted by the Indigenous people and carried out work with them, and not the Spanish, thus from the very beginning the Essequibo region did not belong to Spain or Venezuela, but belong to the Dutch.

Section IX - Geneva Agreement (1966)

The following information was retrieved on 12/14/23, 7:19 PM Geneva Agreement (1966) - Wikipedia - Geneva Agreement (1966) states the following:

‘The Agreement to resolve the conflict between Venezuela and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland over the border between Venezuela and British Guiana, better known as the Geneva Agreement, is a treaty between Venezuela and the United Kingdom, along with its colony of British Guiana (which would soon receive its independence), that was signed in Geneva, Switzerland, on 17 February 1966. The treaty outlines the steps taken to resolve the territorial dispute between Venezuela and the United Kingdom over the region of Guayana Esequiba, arising from Venezuela's contention to the UN in 1962 that the 1899 declaration by the Paris Tribunal of Arbitration awarding the territory to British Guiana was null and void, following the publication of Severo Mallet-Prevost's memorandums and other documents from the tribunal that called the decision into question.’

History

‘The Geneva Agreement was published in the Official Gazette of Venezuela No. 28.008 on April 15, 1966, and subsequently registered with the General Office of the Organization of the United Nations on May 5, 1966, under registration number I-8192.

According to the link https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guayana_Esequiba 1/28, retrieved on 12/14/23, 7:38 PM Guayana Esequiba - Wikipedia states: **‘On 18 December 2020, the ICJ accepted the case submitted by Guyana to settle the dispute.** In December 2023, Venezuela held a referendum asking the Venezuelan electorate whether the region should become a state of Venezuela and its population become citizens, where it declared that the results showed overwhelming support for such action. No vote was held in the disputed region.’

Conclusion

From the above information presented, my view is Spain nor Venezuela had never had any valid or legitimate claims to the Essequibo region from the very beginning back in the 1550s. This is not about the 1899 agreement or what took place in 1966. Also from comments I’ve heard from some of the Indigenous people of Guyana, is, they are Guyanese and wants nothing to do with Venezuela.