

**Historical Geographies of Iberian Territories:
Boundary-Making Practices and the Enforcement of
Territorial Sovereignty in the 1864 Spanish-Portuguese
Boundary Treaty.**

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This contribution aims at explaining the ideas of border, territory and sovereignty that emerged through the political, technical and diplomatic negotiations of the 1864 Boundary Treaty establishing the boundary between Spain and Portugal, and how these conceptions produced certain territorial outcomes on the ground that were central to the accomplishment of contemporary liberal forms of statehood. By focusing of this issue, the presentation attempts to highlight the complex dynamics between theories and practices of boundary delimitation that were deployed as part of 19th century state-making. These practices proved to be integral to the territorialization of political sovereignty being at the core of modern statehood.

In our opinion, the 1864 Spanish-Portuguese Boundary Treaty is an exemplary reflection of the concepts of sovereignty characteristic of liberal states, and more broadly, of consolidation of the territorial state in the Iberian Peninsula. As opposed to the concept of sovereignty still in force under absolute monarchies, which was dynastic, patrimonial and

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jurisdictional, the liberal governments responsible for the Treaty based state sovereignty on the exclusive and indivisible jurisdiction and control of territory, which linear boundaries would precisely delimit.

Drawing on an analysis of mostly unpublished archival documentation preparatory to the 1864 Treaty, this contribution focuses on three aspects. Firstly, it addresses the concept and genesis of the territorial state, as well as the ideas and “myths” of sovereignty and borders linked to it, in Europe and the Iberian countries. Secondly, it analyses the theoretical and general delimitation criteria that guided the Treaty. Finally, it studies the way in which these criteria were applied in practice for resolution of the various territorial issues addressed in the Treaty. Our main thesis is that the 1864 Treaty, despite not strictly creating a linear boundary on the Spanish-Portuguese border, did give it an international legal character, in addition to completing and clarifying the border to delimit state territory in a continuous and compact way.

Implementation of this process came by means of a series of operations consisting of a geometric and geopolitical purification of the territory. This purification removed the impurities or ‘irregularities’ (the term usually used in the process) that, in the view of both governments, gave rise to troubles among border towns and hindered the effective enforcement of state sovereignty, such as lands of doubtful, shared, or disputed ownership; towns, limits, and islands intersected by the border line; territories of hybrid or diffuse sovereignty, or even independent of both states; enclaved roads and territories; and, finally, the river boundaries along which the wet border had been partially interrupted by changes to their course.

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