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USA-Brazil

Trump Tariffs Threaten Brazil: Pushing for Regime Change

- Features -

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U.S. IMPERIALISM IS reaching a new level under Trump's second administration. Amid the instability of the U.S. economy and its global power, the American president is pursuing an openly aggressive foreign policy, combining threats, acts of aggression, and distancing the United States from multilateral bourgeois institutions that it once helped create.

South America's largest country, Brazil fits squarely into this framework. In July, Trump announced the highest tariffs in the world against Brazil: 50% on all products. A month later, when the tariffs went into effect, about 700 products were removed from the list—but still, more than half of Brazilian exports remain subject to the tariffs.

The reason behind such action was despicable: to support Brazil's far-right former president, Jair Bolsonaro, who is under judicial investigation for attempting a coup and has now officially been found guilty by the courts.

The primary focus of U.S. competition is China. But even traditional allies — such as Europe, Japan, and South Korea — are being subjected to pressure and blackmail to force concessions. Toward Global South countries, Trump is testing even more radical actions. In these cases, his goal is to directly control national political regimes to extract economic and political advantages.

Where there are political barriers to this plan, the president moves to weaken national economies, generate political instability, threaten national sovereignty, and encourage regime change. In the background, the aim is also to remove Global South countries from China's sphere of influence and the BRICS alliance, reasserting the U.S. "backyards" around the world through intimidation.

Just weeks after the announcement, other tangible motives behind the intimidation attempts surfaced: for months, the United States has been investigating a successful online payment system developed by Brazil's Central Bank called "Pix." The system has led to a sharp decline in the use of American-branded credit and debit cards such as Visa and Mastercard.

U.S. imperialism is also eyeing Brazil's rare-earth minerals and other natural resources and has taken issue with local efforts to regulate Big Tech companies in the country.

Since then, the U.S. government has refused to open any negotiations. One of Jair Bolsonaro's sons, Eduardo Bolsonaro, has been living in Washington D.C. for months and frequently meets with White House figures.

The U.S. embassy in Brazil regularly posts threats on social media every time the Brazilian justice system advances its investigations against the coup plotters. Justices of Brazil's Supreme Court have had their U.S. visas revoked, and the court's chief justice, Alexandre de Moraes, was targeted under the Magnitsky Act.

Recently, after Bolsonaro and his criminal organization (which includes members of the military) were officially convicted, the White House spokesperson warned that Brazil could face further sanctions, both economic and military.

Threat to Sovereignty

There is no doubt that Brazil is currently facing the gravest threat to its sovereignty in decades, and the strongest

encouragement of coup activity since the U.S.-backed civil-military coup of 1964, which installed a dictatorship that lasted until 1985.

The political situation, however, is more complex. Given the severity of the moment, a renewed anti-imperialist consciousness is awakening in the country.

So far this has led to a wave of street mobilizations, centered around slogans such as “Trump Out of Brazil” and “Sovereign Brazil.” It has also resulted in a modest boost in popularity for the government of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, whose current administration has been struggling with low approval ratings.

Lula’s role, in fact, deserves special attention. Contrary to how he is often portrayed internationally, the Workers’ Party (PT) leader long ago abandoned any socialist or clearly left-wing strategy.

Instead, his administration plays by the rules of neoliberal economics, seeks to negotiate with the political establishment, and offers only piecemeal gains to the working classes, without altering Brazil’s extreme social inequality. During his first two terms (2003–2010), Lula actually maintained good relations with both Bush and Obama.

While it’s important not to harbor illusions about Lula, it’s undeniable that the basic steps his government has taken in response to imperialist aggression give his current position a progressive character in this confrontation. Even so, Lula remains unwilling to take the necessary measures to achieve full Brazilian sovereignty.

Such measures would require breaking with all forms of imperialism: U.S. first, but also Chinese. It is also worth noting that so far, the Brazilian government has not severed trade or diplomatic relations with the genocidal state of Israel.

In light of this scenario, we believe that a revolutionary policy in Brazil must first prioritize broad unity of action, even in coordination with the government, to fight against imperialism, threats of aggression, and potential coups.

It’s important to remember that, as in many parts of the world, neofascist sectors in Brazil remain mobilized, despite some of their leaders, such as Bolsonaro, facing investigation and punishment. This mobilization continues both in the streets and within parliament and institutions.

A Socialist Policy

On a second level, the socialist left must maintain its political and organizational independence and use that strength to push for a program of radical transformation.

As is well known, the far-right gains ground when the masses become disillusioned with the current political regime. But overcoming this regime can only truly happen by fulfilling the aspirations of the masses through a radical, socialist policy. The far-right-wing alternative is nothing but barbarism, based on dismantling workers’ rights and destroying the environment.

The Socialism and Liberty Party (PSOL), with its national relevance and strength, is certainly one of the key poles of this left, and we work to help strengthen it. We are also strongly committed to organizing the 1st International

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Antifascist Conference, to be held in March 2026 in Porto Alegre, Brazil.

The coming months will demand maximum attention to the Brazilian political landscape and international solidarity from workers worldwide with the Brazilian people fighting to defend their sovereignty and their right to a more equal and hopeful future.

Source: [*Against the Current*](#).

PS:

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