

Facing far-right coup plot in Brazil, Lula curries favor with imperialism at COP27

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Less than two weeks after being proclaimed president-elect of Brazil, former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of the Workers Party (PT) traveled to the COP27 climate conference in Egypt as part of a delegation from the state governments of the Brazilian Amazon. The ostensible purpose of the trip, in the president-elect's own words, was to announce that "Brazil is back" in climate talks, and that this would boost international efforts to contain global warming and climate catastrophe.

The trip was viewed internally and internationally as a first act of the incoming government, which is set to be inaugurated on January 1. Despite the claims about a renewed political will to fight climate change, however, the main objective of Lula's trip was to win support for his efforts to fend off the frenetic agitation led by the defeated fascist incumbent, president Jair Bolsonaro to undermine his inauguration and future government.

By rushing the government transition with virtually daily announcements for the transition team and then arranging for Lula to meet imperialist officials at the COP27, the PT seeks to portray the Bolsonaro regime as politically dead and hide the existential crisis confronting Brazilian bourgeois democracy.

Bolsonaro has not recognized Lula's victory, and despite the best efforts of the Supreme Court and Lula's congressional coalition, along with state governors sending shock troops to clear roads, fascist demonstrations calling for the Army to intervene in favor of Bolsonaro remain at the gates of local military headquarters. With Bolsonaro silent and secluded, officially due to an extensive infection in his legs, the military command came out twice in less than a week to reaffirm its recognition of the legitimacy of the calls for a coup, criticizing the Supreme Court (STF) and the "elected authorities"—especially Congress—for failing to address the demands of the coup plotters.

A report by the armed forces on Brazil's electronic voting machines, released on November 9 after an unprecedented "parallel vote count" carried out on Bolsonaro's orders, stated ambiguously that fraud was not detected, but could not be ruled out, providing the president and his fascist supporters with crucial ammunition to demand the annulment of the elections.

On Wednesday, the president of Bolsonaro's Liberal Party (PL) announced that it would press ahead with a lawsuit

demanding that the Electoral Court (TSE) annul all the votes cast in the Lula-Bolsonaro runoff of October 31 through 250,000 voting machines manufactured before 2020, or over half of the total, based on a hoax about their security. The party announced that the "accountable" votes in the second round were only 40 percent of the total, and these had given Bolsonaro a narrow 51 percent victory.

Given the high likelihood that the TSE will summarily dismiss the case, the PL will allow the military to feed the narrative that the court is systematically undermining other branches of government, reinforcing the defense by military commanders of the Army's role as a "moderating power" in Brazilian politics, a direct reference to the absolute powers of the country's former emperors as the "fourth power" with the right to annul the actions of any other government entity.

In the most open formulation yet of such a political doctrine, the military command released a statement on the ongoing fascist demonstrations declaring their demands to be legitimate, denouncing "restrictions of liberty by public officials," a reference to Bolsonaro's claims that the Electoral Court suppressed his political rights in the campaign, and claiming the military had always been "moderators in the most important moments of history." In the historical vernacular of Brazilian generals, the 1964 coup ousting elected Labor Party president João Goulart and inaugurating a 21-year dictatorship which claimed thousands of victims is the most important of these "moderating" occasions.

A few days later on Friday, the Army High Command thought it necessary to deny in yet another statement accusations by far-right groups that five generals supposedly blocking a coup were "watermelons" – wearing green uniforms on the outside, but harboring "red" socialist sympathies on the inside, supposedly aligned with the Workers Party. Instead of denying any discussions of a coup in the High Command, the statement condemned the accusations that it was defending the elected PT authorities as "a malicious and criminal attempt to stain the personal honor of members with over forty years of services rendered."

The risks of the situation are further exposed by the fact that Lula has not yet appointed any representative to lead the government transition on defense issues, despite naming over

100 officials to over 30 task forces from economy and agribusiness to housing and indigenous matters.

In contrast to this scenario of extreme instability, in which senior former military officials defend the right to rebel against civil authority and military commanders claim fascist coup plotters are the real victims of the courts, national and international headlines praised Lula's attendance at COP27 as nothing less than a political earthquake.

Reuters reported that "Greeted like a rock star, Brazil's Lula promises to protect Amazon." The *New York Times* headlined its report, "Expectations Run High as an Exuberant Lula Speaks at Climate Summit." Finally, Bloomberg stated that "Lula's Pledge to Save Amazon Wins Hero's Welcome at COP27." French president Emmanuel Macron tweeted his praise that "Brazil is back to an Amazonian strategy" and announcing that his country, with its overseas French Guyana department bordering northern Brazil, would support Lula's proposal to hold COP30 in the country.

For his part, Lula took the opportunity of a side visit to Portugal, in which he met the country's president and prime minister, to completely dismiss the far-right threat and above all the military's involvement in it. He declared that the military brass were "calm," that they "knew him," and that his government would "bring back normalcy in the relations between government and the military." He concluded by claiming he was sure the military would "fulfill its constitutional role" and that he would not be "carried away by Twitter intrigues."

The entire official assessment of the COP27, including Lula's participation, as representing a breakthrough to avoid catastrophic climate collapse threatening billions with displacement and poverty, could not be further from the truth. Despite the unusually frank words of UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres that the world is "on a highway to climate hell" and the UN reporting that "there is no credible path" to limit global warming even to the 1.5C target, the talks failed to agree on any new measures. Instead, imperialist governments dedicated themselves entirely to assessing the next steps in the NATO war against Russia in Ukraine and a new redivision of resource-rich regions of the world under the pretext of guaranteeing supply chains for the minerals-demanding electrification of energy production.

The participation of the Brazilian delegation was entirely in line with the global war footing. Despite a few words by Lula on social inequality and the impact of climate change on poor nations, the president-elect posed as a reliable partner of US and European powers in granting access to the resource-rich Amazon region with his proposal to host the COP30 in the Brazilian state of Pará. Unfettered access to the Amazon and the whole of South America is crucial for imperialist war plans against China, of which the NATO war against Russia in Ukraine is an integral part.

The need of the imperialist powers to both shift their supply

chains away from Asia in preparation for war and undermine China's presence in the region is turning South America into one of the flash points of the future nuclear world war being plotted in Washington and European capitals. A particularly dirty task in the cover-up of the real aims of the COP27 was delegated by the PT to the pseudo-left Socialism and Liberty Party (PSOL), which sent two Indigenous deputies and the prospective first-ever Original Peoples Ministers to pose with warmongers such as John Kerry, the US climate envoy.

The PT's political maneuvering at the COP27 is determined above all by its adamant opposition to even revealing the real depth of the Brazilian and international capitalist crisis driving the international resurgence of the far-right, out of fear that it will provoke an uncontrollable reaction by the working class, threatening capitalism itself. Under such conditions, the party sees in the imperialist powers virtually its only constituency against the assault on bourgeois democracy led by Bolsonaro. For their part, Washington, Paris and Berlin see Lula as a better bet for providing a functioning Brazilian government that will collaborate with their strategic war aims.

There is no little self-delusion in all of these assessments. Lula's belief that he will be able to perform a balancing act between the imperialist powers and Brazil's objective economic dependence on China is no less naive than the Brazilian and international ruling classes' belief that the PT will be able to suppress the Brazilian working class for an indefinite time. The Brazilian far-right, with support of significant layers of the police and military apparatus, is preparing precisely for such a confrontation, whatever its immediate success in preventing Lula's inauguration and future rule. The Brazilian working class must prepare accordingly, by breaking the straight-jacket imposed by the Workers Party and adopting a socialist and internationalist strategy to abolish capitalism.



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