

Brazil and US mark 200 years of diplomatic ties as Washington drags Latin America into global war

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May 26 marked the 200th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Brazil and the United States. Celebrations of the occasion were emphatically promoted by US imperialism as it strives to drag Brazil and Latin America as whole into its escalating drive to global war.

Behind all the speeches celebrating the “historic friendship” between the two largest countries in the Americas, the US is holding extensive military exercises with Brazil, and virtually every country in South America, and is struggling to assert its control over the region’s critical resources. This includes ongoing pressure on Brazil to sign a deal with Washington for the exploitation of the country’s critical minerals.

Both commercial and military initiatives in the region are being promoted by US imperialism as war measures against its “strategic competitors” Iran, Russia, and, above all, China, which in the late 2000s overtook the US and became the leading trading partner of the main South American countries.

Statements by the US officials chosen by the Biden administration to represent it at the celebrations in Brazil expressed the belligerent way US imperialism viewed this anniversary. On May 27, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken praised the “bicentennial partnership” between Brazil and the US, declaring in an official statement: “We were allies in World War II, when US and Brazilian forces fought side by side in the Italian Campaign, demonstrating courage and sacrifice that contributed to victory.”

The top American representative present in Brazil for the celebrations was Gen. Laura Richardson, head of the US Southern Command (SouthCom). As SouthCom wrote on its X/Twitter account on the day of her arrival, May 20, the purpose of Richardson’s trip was to “explore ways to deepen defense cooperation” with Brazil.

Richardson and other US military officials went to São José dos Campos, the main center of Brazil’s arms industry, to participate in a roundtable at a Boeing technology center and visit the plant of the aerospace corporation Embraer, which also produces military aircraft, where they “discussed aerospace and defense partnerships.”

The de facto official celebration of the “bicentennial partnership” of Brazil and the US was held on May 22, aboard the nuclear aircraft carrier USS George Washington, docked in Rio de

Janeiro for the Southern Seas 2024 military operation. At the event aboard the American warship, Richardson and the US ambassador to Brazil, Elisabeth Bagley, received Brazilian military commanders and government officials to praise “the long-standing partnership between the two countries,” in Bagley’s words.

After military exercises with the Brazilian Navy between May 17 and 19, off the coast of Rio de Janeiro, the USS George Washington continued its journey to other South American coastal countries for military engagements and port visits meant “to enhance capability, improve interoperability, and strengthen maritime partnerships,” according to SouthCom. The aircraft carrier is now heading to Peru, where the Resolute Sentinel 2024 military exercise is taking place, involving 1,500 military personnel from Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, Chile, Brazil, France and the United States.

General Richardson has escalated US imperialism’s challenge to the right of South American countries to establish any kind of partnership with China, Iran and Russia, countries that have “authoritarian regimes in Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela” as their main partners, as she stated in March at a US congressional hearing.

In a May 24 interview with the daily *Valor Econômico*, Richardson praised the partnerships between the US and “like-minded democracies” in the region that respect “sovereignty” and “the people,” “which is not the case with a communist country [referring to China], because they don’t respect the rights of their own people.”

She also criticized Brazil’s possible entry into Beijing’s Belt and Road Initiative, which already includes 21 of the 31 Latin American countries. According to General Richardson, this initiative “looks very good in the initial stages ... [but] sovereignty is taken away over time if the loans are not paid back.” In contrast, she encouraged Brazil to join Washington’s Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity, established in 2022 between the US and 10 Latin American countries with the aim of integration of their supply chains, including the exploration of critical minerals demanded by the industrial “energetic transition.”

China’s response to these provocations came on May 26 through the spokesman for the Chinese Embassy in Brazil. He referred to General Richardson’s “complete political lies” about China, saying that the US “adopts a typical Cold War mentality and

follows a hegemonistic logic.” He also recalled the “dirty record” of the US in the region, which “has used ‘democracy’ and ‘human rights’ as a pretext to attack, sanction and interfere in the countries of the region, bringing chaos and tragedy to many nations.”

The record of Washington’s military coups and other imperialist interventions in Brazil and across Latin America was completely buried by the government of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (Workers Party - PT) in its celebrations of the bicentennial of diplomatic relations with the US. This record includes most importantly the 1964 CIA-backed coup in Brazil, which inaugurated a 21-year-long bloody military dictatorship that crushed the working class and the political opposition and turned the country into a staging ground for US imperialism’s interventions across the region.

Lula’s deliberate attempt to cover up this “dark chapter” in the history of US-Brazilian relations is a continuation of his government’s efforts to “turn the page” on the history of the military coup on its recent 60th anniversary.

Such efforts have been carried out by the PT in the interest of placating the Brazilian military, which was directly involved in the recent conspiracy to stage a coup d’etat led by the fascist former president Jair Bolsonaro. Since then, Brazil’s generals have increasingly strengthened their ties with the US military, whether through official partnerships backed by Lula or through glaringly extra-constitutional channels unchallenged by the PT.

In a blatant demonstration of its subservience to imperialism, the PT government held the seminar “200 years of Brazil-USA friendship,” in which the foreign minister Mauro Vieira reviewed the historical relations between the two countries. Vieira stressed that, under the Lula and Biden administrations, Brazil and the US are advancing common agendas that reflect the concern “for the protection of our democratic institutions, the promotion of racial equality [and] concerning combating climate change.” Faced with the “formation of an increasingly multipolar order,” he expressed the conviction that “Brazil and the US can collaborate to push forward the reform of global governance ... [and] make the international order more just, harmonious and balanced.”

Far from representing a challenge to US imperialism, the Lula government’s defense of a “multipolar world” is intended to secure for Brazilian capital a better place on an increasingly explosive global political chessboard that is dominated by the threat of a new imperialist world war. One of the main strategic pieces that the Lula government believes it holds in its hands is Brazil’s natural resources demanded by the so-called “green economy” and “energetic transition.”

Although the US remains the largest investor in Brazil, Chinese companies have been increasingly investing in telecommunications infrastructure and in the mining sector, particularly in the extraction of niobium—a critical mineral for the aerospace, automotive, weapons and electronics industries—that has more than 90 percent of its world production carried out in Brazil. Chinese companies are also ahead in the production of electric vehicles in the country.

Expressing Washington’s determination to reverse this situation, Ambassador Bagley recently declared in an interview with *Folha*

de S. Paulo that US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, who has been at the forefront of the economic war against China, is engaged in discussions with Lula’s finance minister, Fernando Haddad, about deals “especially with critical minerals, green hydrogen.” Haddad, for his part, declared last September at the UN General Assembly the PT government’s intention “to open up new possibilities for Brazil and the US to get closer with mutual gains,” advocating joining the Inflation Reduction Act, the US bill to encourage the “green economy.” He insists that the so-called “ecological transformation” represents “the great opportunity Brazil has to re-industrialize itself.”

Exposing the reactionary nature of the PT’s perspective of “re-industrializing” Brazil, government officials and academics connected to the party have increasingly advocated the industrial policies of Getúlio Vargas’ World War II era corporatist dictatorship as a role model for the present. When the US entered the war, it established agreements with Brazil for strategic raw materials such as rubber, iron ore and manganese. In 1942, Vargas accepted the installation of a US air base in Rio Grande do Norte in exchange for financing the National Steel Company (CSN), that boosted the development of Brazilian industry in the second half of the 20th century.

Behind the hypocritical and bankrupt claims that increased integration with Washington’s so-called “ecological transition” and exploitation of critical minerals represent a perspective for the reversion of the historical de-industrialization of Brazil, the PT and its pseudo-left satellites are manifesting their orientation towards imperialism and the opportunities generated by the drive to world war for Brazilian capitalism.

The result of the two-century-long historical process of the rise and decline of American imperialism won’t be a “more just, harmonious and balanced international order,” as claimed by Vieira, but the explosion of militarism that threatens South America and the world with a nuclear catastrophe. The only progressive response to this threat is the development of a revolutionary movement of the international working class for socialism.



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