

Were the Koch Brothers Behind the Impeachment of Brazil's President Dilma Rousseff

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Oil barons, media moguls and politicians are leading the efforts to impeach recently re-elected President Dilma Rousseff.

The accusations against Rousseff began during the most recent election campaign. Right-wing candidates Aécio Neves and Marina Silva went to lengths to link Rousseff to a corruption scandal at Petrobras, the state-owned oil company.

Despite no direct links to Rousseff, the candidates tried to imply that she was involved given that the scandal broke during her government. The right-wing media followed suit, investigating every relationship that Rousseff had with the Petrobras executives.

In November, 2014, the Brazilian authorities arrested 27 people linked to the scandal.

However, the scandal has continued, and both the opposition and the mainstream media outlets have covered it widely.

A key debate began in February 2015, when the head of Petrobras stepped down after failing to lift the company's stock price. Rousseff was faced with the difficult choice of appointing a new director, either from the private sector or public sector.

Finally the president appointed the former head of the state-owned Bank of Brazil, and the company continues to increase its oil production. The government also recovered US\$44 million from Swiss accounts belonging to Petrobras' former manager, Pedro Barusco, who is among those involved in the scandal.

Even though the investigations continue, opposition parties are trying to launch a Referendum in an attempt to remove Dilma from power.

The protest, organized for March 15, is being led by several groups with powerful backers. The group organizing the demonstration is the so-called Free Brazil Movement (MBL), a far-right collective of young people that believe the solutions to the country's economic problems are based on free-market policies.

Fabio Ostermann and Juliano Torres, two of MBL leaders, were educated in the Atlas Leadership Academy, linked to the Atlas Economic Research Foundation, financed by the

notorious U.S. businessmen the Koch Brothers.

Furthermore, the brothers have millions of dollars invested in the oil industry, which could explain their interest in destabilizing the Brazilian government and Petrobras.

Another of the leading groups, Students For Liberty (EPL) - working together with the MBL - is the Brazilian associate of an organization with the same name in the U.S., also financed by the Koch Brothers.

Furthermore, investment banker Hélio Beltrão Filho, the national head of EPL, inherited shares in Grupo Ultra, one of Brazil's largest holdings. Grupo Ultra provided logistic and financial support to the right-wing military coup in 1964.

A third important group involved in the protests is VemPraRua (Come to the streets), which has become the center of controversy in recent weeks.

After several journalists investigated the group, revealing that its financial support came from the Study Foundation, which belongs to Brazil's richest individual, Jorge Paulo Lemann.

Lemann is owner of AmBev, the biggest beer production company of Brazil, and owns the Burger King franchise in the country.

The businessman has denied taking a stand in Brazilian politics and claims the foundation's director used it for political purposes. Rodrigo Telles, who runs the foundation, is also an AmBev share holder.

Despite the efforts to impeach President Rousseff, many analysts believe such a move would inevitably fail.

Nonetheless, many government supporters see the move as part of a coup, similar to what occurred in Honduras against Manuel Zelaya or in Paraguay against Fernando Lugo.

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