

Bolsonaro Needs Help to Overcome Coronavirus Pandemic Despite Loyalty to Trump

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*Brazilian **President Jair Bolsonaro** after weeks of downplaying the potential seriousness of the coronavirus is beginning to lose popularity for his irrationality, especially since describing the coronavirus as a “fantasy” and a “minor flu.” While all South American countries, with the exception of fellow neoliberal Chile, have taken drastic measures to fight against coronavirus, Bolsonaro has been inactive, allowing the infection rate in Brazil to more than quadruple in only a week to over 2,200 people. This has caused angst for many in the middle classes that were crucial to his election as the country’s presidency in 2018. For days now, many in the middle class have led protests from their home balconies by banging on saucepans loudly. Some in Brazil are even speculating whether he is allowing coronavirus to get out of control as a reason to cancel the municipality elections scheduled for October this year – this at a time when his popularity continues to tumble.*

Bolsonaro fell out with the Governor of São Paulo, **João Doria**, whom he [called](#) a “lunatic” and accused of “creating terror” for implementing quarantine in the most populous state and financially important state of Brazil. São Paulo is the most infected state and highest death count. The conservative governor of Rio, second most populous state in Brazil, **Wilson Witzel**, [said](#) “The lack of dialogue and sanity is unacceptable. I never thought that I would experience this in a democracy.” Effectively the most important states of Brazil are defying the Federal government feeling that Bolsonaro is doing next to nothing to deal with the pandemic.

According to public opinion institutes, Bolsonaro’s popularity is crumbling. [In a Datafolha survey](#), 35% of Brazilians believe Bolsonaro is handling the pandemic in a good manner while 33% thought it was poor. Although it may seem insignificant, this would overlook the immense popularity that Bolsonaro once had, and in his stronghold of São Paulo, it is especially telling how much his popularity is falling. In an [IBOPE](#) survey, 48% of people in São Paulo found his handling of the pandemic as bad and lousy, and 25% of people believed it was optimal and good. These figures will only continue to get worse for Bolsonaro as the Center for Mathematical Modelling of Infectious Diseases of the London School of Tropical Medicine, [estimates that](#) the underreporting of those infected in Brazil is enormous and that there would be at least nine times more than the 2,200 detected so far.

One of Bolsonaro’s ideas to deal with the economic fallback of the pandemic was to suspend work contracts and therefore workers’ wages for four months. He had to back down in the face of massive opposition from all social strata, which was especially expected since 21% of Brazilians [live in poverty](#). Bolsonaro is of course protecting ultra-capitalist interests in Brazil, as he openly said he would before his election, where he was dubbed “Tropical Trump.”

This moniker continues to be proven true as Bolsonaro follows every step of U.S. **President Donald Trump**, who yesterday expressed his ambition to end American lockdowns by Easter. Bolsonaro following shortly after Trump announced that Brazil's lockdown measures are exaggerated and his country will be back open for business. However, this will prove to be a catastrophic move as Brazil's fragile healthcare system will inevitably be overwhelmed and the country will not be able to conduct business 'as usual.'

At a time when the U.S. has shown self-interest during this pandemic by abandoning its closest NATO allies, Bolsonaro's son Eduardo created a [diplomatic crisis between Brazil and China](#) by saying on Twitter that "China is to blame [for the coronavirus] and freedom would be the solution." The Chinese Embassy hit back, saying: "His words are extremely irresponsible and sound familiar. They are still an imitation of your dear friends. Upon returning from Miami, he unfortunately contracted a mental virus, which is infecting friendships among our peoples." Brazil's Foreign Minister then ludicrously demanded that China apologize for the insult. [Bolsonaro had to call Chinese President Xi Jinping](#) yesterday to affirm Brazil's "friendship" with China and reverse the damage made by his son and Foreign Minister Ernesto Araújo.

Many Europeans appreciate Russian, Chinese and Cuban assistance to fight against coronavirus as Washington has abandoned its European NATO allies, isolated itself and refused to help the hardest hit countries such as Spain and Italy. And unsurprisingly, the U.S. has shown a complete disinterest to assist Brazil. Bolsonaro has already had to [humiliate itself](#) by getting Brazilian Secretary of Health João Gabbardo to request Cuba to send back doctors who were expelled by him so they can help prevent the country's health system from collapsing. Although Bolsonaro does everything he can to serve Trump's agenda against China, Cuba and other states, it is these very states that Brazil must cooperate with so that it can navigate through this pandemic. Bolsonaro must now have a serious relook at his foreign policy in light of this fact.

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