

Lula's Release Will Only Reinvigorate the Pink Tide Against U.S. Hegemony in Latin America

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*The Workers Party (PT) ruled Brazil, mostly under the leadership of the charismatic **Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva**, or simply known as Lula, from 2003 until his successor's impeachment in 2016. This period saw Brazil undergo major changes and advancements with an emphasis on educating the poor, providing access to healthcare for all Brazilians, poverty reduction and Latin American integration. Although the PT did not challenge the capitalist system entirely, there was an emphasis on reducing the neoliberal model that has exploited South America since Chilean dictator [Augusto Pinochet](#) allowed his country to be economically ruled by this U.S.-endorsed system since the 1970's.*

The progress made by Lula saw a great reversal after his controversial arrest for allegedly engaging in corrupt practices. However, after only 580 days of incarceration in what was supposed to be a near decade long sentence, the Federal Supreme Court released the former president on Thursday from prison. His release, although initially a joyful event for progressives into South America, was quickly overshadowed by the coup taking place in Bolivia that has seen **Evo Morales** resign as president.

The successful coup against Morales is a setback for the re-emergence of the socialist [Pink Tide](#) order in Latin America. However, the release of Lula is likely to re-energize the entire cultural space against U.S. hegemony that has nearly completely dominated region since the mid-2010's when the "Blue Tide" (Conservative Wave) took over Brazil, Argentina, Peru and other Latin American states in the aftermath of the Pink Tide.

There is little doubt that the news has become not only the political event of the year in Brazil, but in all of Latin America. The second half of 2019 has seen major changes and polarizations occur with major revolts in Ecuador and Chile against the ruling government's, **Mauricio Macri** failure to be re-elected in Argentina, and the likelihood of a Leftist election victory in Uruguay later this month.

The majority of analysts who believe Lula is innocent claim the reason he was imprisoned was to prevent his election victory in 2018. Lula often claims that he is more than a man, but "[an idea](#)." However, if Lula is "an idea," this also begs the question on why the "idea" was not successful when represented by Fernando Haddad, the PT presidential candidate who failed against Jair Bolsonaro in last year's election.

Rather, people are more likely to follow people than ideologies. Lula is incorrect to call himself "an idea," and rather he is an icon or a symbol. The symbol of Lula is one of hope for the poorest and progressives of Latin America, and his "idea" can only be continued through him since he has built a symbology behind his persona. Therefore, the meaning behind his

release, many years earlier than originally sentenced, has a tremendous meaning across the region. Even Bolsonaro had to resign to the fact that he “would not be here” as president if Lula had not been imprisoned by then judge Sérgio Moro – Brazil’s current Minister of Justice.

Lula’s freedom is without a doubt a major shock to the reactionary forces operating in Brazil with full encouragement and endorsement by Bolsonaro. It is for this reason that former U.S. President Donald Trump’s strategist and adviser **Steve Bannon** criticized the release of Lula, [calling him](#) “one of the most cynical and corrupt politicians in the world,” claiming the release of Lula will bring a return of corruption to Brazil. Although Bannon is a former adviser to U.S. President Donald Trump, he still wields great amount of influence and power in Washington DC and recently even cancelled trips to Brazil, England, Italy and Australia to structure a task force to fight against the impeachment process against Trump.

And of course, the “return of corruption” to Brazil is a ludicrous claim made by Bannon, especially when considering he has been a staunch defender and endorser of Bolsonaro and has elevated Eduardo Bolsonaro, a son of the Brazilian president, to the main representative of South America in “The Movement,” a consortium of European representatives who support right-wing nationalist populism while defending exploitative economic policies. Bannon’s ideological extremism defends “economic nationalism,” but it is not confused with neoliberalism or globalism. His extremist economic nationalism conceptually cannot cross the borders of the American empire, but as mere rhetoric, as it is incompatible with economic policies that promote the economic and social development of any other state. However, Bannon of course did not mention that Bolsonaro, his sons and his aides have been involved in [endless scandals and corruption cases](#) since January this year.

Although Bannon may not be involved with the Trump administration at an official level, there is little doubt that he has always been the bridge between Trump and the Bolsonaro family. Therefore, Bannon quickly coming out to denounce Lula after his release from prison can suggest that his release will be a major concern for Washington.

Why?

Lula certainly did not wait long before firing shots at the defenders of U.S. unilateralism in Latin America after his release from prison, stating: “The so-called Left that Bolsonaro fears so much will defeat the extreme Right – Brazil does not deserve the government it has,” citing unemployment rates, attacks on education and the poor, and the “lies” by Bolsonaro. He also had a look at the Latin American situation, praising Chile’s protests and called for solidarity with the Chilean people, while also showing his support for Evo Morales and denouncing Trump.

This was the Lula that Brazilians had fallen in love with. They fell in love with a leader who had no fear to speak his mind. It is not the destructive Bolsonaro’s way that attacks Brazil’s minorities and most vulnerable, but Lula’s way that attacks the forces that kept Brazil poor and subservient to Washington, and those who also prevent efforts for Latin American cooperation and integration.

It is for this reason that Lula also immediately addressed the Puebla Group, a regional body that brings together 32 progressive leaders from twelve countries that held its second meeting in Buenos Aires over the weekend.

In his message to the Puebla Group, Lula was firm in announcing that he will fight “the rotten side of the Judiciary, the rotten side of the Federal Police, the Public Ministry and Brazilian companies,” and that “It is important that we have courage and face them, because the Latin American elite is a very conservative elite and does not accept the idea of a poor people up the ladder of social conquests.”

However, his most startling revelation was that he has “the objective of constituting a very strong Latin American regional integration [...] with the dream of building our great Latin America.”

It is this very goal of uniting Latin America to ensure the regions sovereignty and economic independence that U.S. puppets like Bolsonaro and international populists like Bannon critically has worried about Lula’s release. With Bolsonaro and Bannon worried by Lula, it can only be a matter of time until we see efforts to put Lula back in prison, potentially with Trump’s endorsement, occur again.

Although there are real efforts in maintaining the Blue Tide in Latin America, especially with the latest coup against Morales, it appears that the path towards Pink Tide 2.0 is still firmly paved, especially with Lula’s release from prison. Not only was he a symbol in Brazil, but he was a symbol across of Latin American unity and integration, alongside the equally charismatic Hugo Chávez of Venezuela. There can be little doubt that Lula’s release from prison will not only embolden progressive leaders in Latin America, but it will help reduce U.S. hegemony in the region.

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