

Biden Defends Sanctions Against Brazil and Irritates Bolsonaro

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A new era is beginning in bilateral relations between Brazil and the US. Unlike Donald Trump, who demonstrated greater neutrality in environmental and humanitarian issues and always avoided pronouncements about the Amazon, the presumptive president-elect, Joe Biden, is marked by a much stronger ideological aspect with regard to the great agendas of contemporary times, such as Human Rights and the Environment. And this can deeply shake the structures of relations with the Bolsonaro government in Brazil.

In the election campaign, Biden made several pronouncements about the Amazon. During the first electoral debate in early October, Biden promised to join with other countries and offer 20 billion dollars to help to preserve the region. Previously, the Democrat had already said during an interview that if Bolsonaro did not understand the value of the Amazon, he would bring the world together to protect it. These words were considered outrageous by several Brazilian experts, who saw there a threat of an international coalition against Brazil.

But Bolsonaro was not exasperated in his responses to Biden until the presidential elections were over. Now, with Biden's looming victory and the possibility that the Democrat's threats materialize, Bolsonaro responds in a tone of extreme aggressiveness. During an event in Brasilia on Tuesday (November 10), Bolsonaro said that, in the face of the threat of imposing economic barriers, diplomacy is not enough, and "gunpowder" is needed. With the word "gunpowder", Bolsonaro clearly refers to the firepower of the armed forces, which in practice means that the Brazilian president threatened to go to war with the US.

This situation would have been utterly impossible until months ago, when ties between Brasilia and Washington were more stable due to diplomacy between Bolsonaro and Trump. However, with a Democrat president absolutely unwilling to tolerate Bolsonaro's irresponsible environmental policies, the friendship between these countries is ruined. Biden will try to isolate Brazil more and more in its international relations, applying an economic suffocation tactic to provoke internal changes. The Bolsonaro government will be forced to adopt a new strategy in its foreign policy, as automatic alignment with Washington can no longer work.

As for his threat of war, Bolsonaro has no choice but to change the tone of his speech in the next statements. The Brazilian president's revolt is, from a certain point of view, understandable, considering that Biden made several previous provocations against Brazil. Undoubtedly, Bolsonaro's environmental policy is reprehensible, but this does not justify that Biden threatens to "unite the world" against Brazil. The imposition of sanctions can be fair and correct, as long as it takes place within the parameters of international law and seeks to solve a real problem for the benefit of global society – it is not a decision that can

come unilaterally from the President of the US. However, Brazil does not have the material conditions to carry out a project as bold as a war against the US – this would be the end of the Brazilian National State.

Biden will not understand Bolsonaro's words as a real threat at the military level, but he will certainly step up the measures against Brazil, further affecting bilateral relations. Still, with that Biden can recover the global campaign for the internationalization of the Amazon even more aggressively and, at some point, propose a "humanitarian intervention" in Brazil for environmental purposes. The scenario of possibilities is immense, having as common point the increase in mutual hostilities between Brazil and the US.

As we can see, in a few days, the basis of relations between Brazil and the US has been completely reversed. This is largely the result of the irresponsibility of the Bolsonaro government, which placed too much trust in its northern ally, without any strategic sense. The close relationship that Bolsonaro established with the US will be used by Biden against Bolsonaro himself. The joint strategies waged with American and Colombian officials on Amazonian soil to surround Venezuela will now be used to intimidate Brazil itself. The Bolsonaro government simply seems to have forgotten that the American elections would take place halfway through the Brazilian president's term, and the entire alliance sealed in two years could collapse suddenly.

It is important to remember that this year the Brazilian military released an intelligence report that was extremely criticized for placing France as the greatest threat to Brazil. The main reason was Macron's campaign for the internationalization of the Amazon, which is now recovered by Biden. Once again, Brazilian strategists were wrong: The Amazon remains the focus of attention, but now the main threat to Brazilian national security comes from Washington, not Paris.

In any case, Bolsonaro must immediately reform Brazilian environmental policies.

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