

Brazilian President's Son Creates Diplomatic Crisis Between Brazil and China

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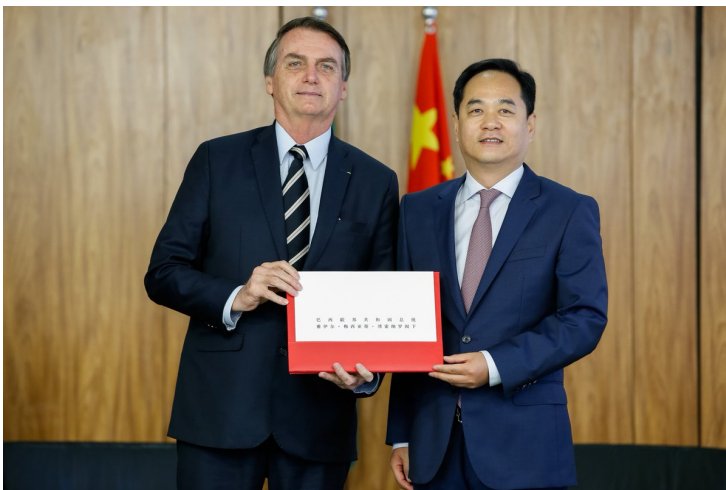
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Federal deputy Eduardo Bolsonaro, son of Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, has started a serious diplomatic crisis between Brazil and China. On March 18, the congressman published on a social network:

"Whoever watched Chernobyl will understand what happened. Replace the nuclear plant with the coronavirus and the Soviet dictatorship with the Chinese. Once again a dictatorship preferred to hide something serious rather than exposing it with wear and tear, but that would save countless lives. China is to blame and freedom would be the solution".

Then Eduardo published several accusations to the Chinese government of being responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Chinese response was immediate. China's ambassador to Brazil, Yang Wanming, said that



"the Chinese side vehemently repudiates the deputy's words, and demands that he withdraw them immediately and apologize to the Chinese people."

He also said that he would express his repudiation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Chamber of Deputies. The reaction of the Chinese Embassy website itself was even more incisive:

"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”.

The mention to Miami made in the publication refers to the last official trip by President Jair Bolsonaro and his entourage, to the USA, two weeks ago, in which 22 Brazilian state officials contracted the new coronavirus. The president of the Chamber of Deputies, Rodrigo Maia, responded quickly to the Chinese’s demand, posting on his social network profile:

“On behalf of the Chamber of Deputies, I apologize to China and Ambassador @wanmingyang for the thoughtless words of the deputy Eduardo Bolsonaro”.



However, the attitude of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ernesto Araújo, was not the same as that of Rodrigo Maia. The head of Brazilian diplomacy spoke out in defense of the Bolsonaro family and sharply criticized the Chinese response:

“It is unacceptable for the Chinese ambassador to endorse or share an offensive post to the head of state of Brazil and its voters. (...) We expect a retraction for his offense to the head of state. Brazil wants to maintain the best relations with the government and the Chinese people, promoting business and cooperation for mutual benefit, without ever leaving aside mutual respect”.

Clearly, Ernesto Araújo tries in his speech to reverse the logic of the discussion between Eduardo and the Chinese ambassador. Instead of appeasing the situation by acknowledging the parliamentarian’s mistake and advising him to retract, the Minister demands an apology from the ambassador of the country which Eduardo Bolsonaro publicly offended. Due to the nature of his position, as head of Brazilian diplomacy, Ernesto Araújo should seek to reestablish good relations between countries, without prejudice to either side. However, in the opposite direction, the minister intensified the discussions and deepened a crisis between Brazil and its biggest trading partner, proving its complete inability for the diplomatic exercise.

The Brazilian vice-president himself, General Hamilton Mourão, expressed himself more appropriately, claiming that the views of Eduardo Bolsonaro do not represent the official views of the government. Subsequently, Eduardo spoke again:

“I’ve never intended to speak for the Brazilian government, but, due to all this repercussion, I leave here crystal clear that my intention, once again, was never to offend the Chinese people or to hurt the good relationship between our countries (...) I have never offended the Chinese people, such an interpretation is totally unreasonable. I clarify that I shared a post that criticizes the Chinese government’s action in preventing the pandemic mainly in sharing information that would have been useful on a global scale”.

We can see here a good example of the political praxis of the current Brazilian government. A parliamentarian offends China; China responds to offenses; the head of Brazilian diplomacy starts to demand excuses from China and; the parliamentarian returns to say that he did not offend China, distorting his own speech instead of acknowledging his mistake and asking for forgiveness. The case reveals the total unpreparedness and the most complete malpractice with which the Brazilian government deals with its main relations. The result is simple: now, not only the strategic relations between Brazil and China are shaken, but also their own diplomatic ties.

Making the situation even worse, the crisis comes amid a global pandemic scenario. Unlike Brazil, where the number of cases grows every day and the State remains silent in the face of social chaos, China knew how to deal with the situation very well and already has COVID-19 under control. Stable, Beijing seeks to help other countries affected by the virus, stimulating international cooperation. One of those countries that China had committed to helping was Brazil. In response to a desperate request from the Brazilian Ministry of Health, China was sending medical equipment to Brazil to help fighting the coronavirus. This relationship now does not give any certainty about the future, which, in the event of a cancellation, will represent a great loss for Brazil.

Finally, the Brazilian president himself, Jair Bolsonaro, tried to contact personally with Chinese President Xi Jinping in order to resolve the situation and justify his son’s irresponsible attitude. Xi, however, ignored him and refused to answer, making it clear that China is not willing to “forget” Eduardo’s offense. A new note from the Chinese Embassy was published, this time criticizing and rejecting the administration carried out by Ernesto Araújo.

The attitude of Brazilian politicians is only a reflection of the neoliberal and pro-US ideology behind Jair Bolsonaro. Other similar testimonies have already been made by Brazilian public figures, even stating that COVID-19 may be a biological weapon produced by China itself – the biggest country affected by the pandemic. In addition, sinophobia is growing in the country, with an insurgent hatred against Asians, who are being seen as “propagators of COVID-19”. The collective madness implanted by the Bolsonaro phenomenon is already causing Brazilians to refer to the coronavirus as “Chinese flu” or “Asian virus”. The fact is that the biggest loser in all this is Brazil itself, which is in serious danger of breaking ties with its biggest economic partner.

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